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THE VEDIC RELIGION.

BY THE

REV. K. S. MACDONALD.

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THE VEDIC RELIGION

OR

THE CREED AND PRACTICE OF THE INDO-ARYANS THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO

BY THE

REV. K. S. MACDONALD, M.A.

MISSIONARY, FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, CALCUTTA

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET

1881

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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At the request of the Calcutta Missionary Conference I wrote, during the cold-weather holidays of 1879-80, a paper on this subject. The following Notes are an expansion of that paper. Members of the Conference and other Missionaries expressed a desire and expectation that the paper be published. Impressed by the importance of the subject, and by the fact that there is no book published upon it, though fully conscious of the shortcomings and imperfections of my attempt, I have yielded to the desire, in the hope that others more qualified may take the matter up. I have neither time nor qualifications for it. At present, much is published bearing directly or indirectly upon it in Dr. Muir's most learned volumes, of which six or seven are before the public, in Max Müller's and Monier Williams' more popular works, as well as in many other books containing, among much other matter bearing on Sanskrit literature or the Hindu religion, short sketches of the times and hymns of the Veda. But no one, as far as I am aware, has formally discussed

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the religious opinions and practices of the 'Sanhita' (or *collection* of hymns) of the Rig-Veda from the Christian standpoint.

There is a special necessity at the present time for such a discussion in connection with the rise of the Theistic Church, called the Arya Samaj, at the head of which is Pundit Dayananda Sarasvati Svami, who is now engaged in propagating his own peculiar view of the Veda, and who accepts as an infallible revelation all the four Vedas, but interprets them monotheistically. The Rev. D. Hutton of Mirzapore writes to me: 'I have read, with a good deal of interest and profit, your lecture, which has been appearing from week to week in the *Indian Christian Herald*, and I should be glad to get a complete copy of it. We have in Mirzapore a branch of the Arya Samaj—the new sect, I suppose, I must call them—founded by Dayananda Sarasvati, the Vedic reformer. The secretary often calls on me to talk on religious subjects. It has struck me that parts of your lecture, put into Hindi, would be useful. I feel sure it will be useful in the vernacular. The Svami, as Dayananda Sarasvati is usually called, and his followers believe the 'Sanhita' of the Vedas to be the work of God and eternal. A few judicious selections from your lecture would put matters in a different light.' 'The Svami travels about lecturing eight months, and rests, like Gotama, four,—only he takes his rest in the cold weather. He has a fair

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following in the North-West Provinces, and has printed a number of books.'

My own feeling is that a missionary to the Hindus should know Hinduism. But no human being can thoroughly know Hinduism with its 10,000 Sanskrit MSS. Happily the highest authority among them is the '*Sanhita*' of the Rig-Veda. There is no appeal from it. This, though about half the size of the Bible, a missionary can master as regards its subject-matter. To help him to do so the following pages have been written, in the hope that the Spirit of God may use them for the pulling down of strongholds, and for the building up of His own kingdom in India.

K. S. M.

CALCUTTA, *June* 1880.

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CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION,	1
II.	THEORIES OF INSPIRATION AND REVELATION,	11
III.	THE CONTENTS OF THE RIG-VEDA,	18
IV.	WHAT IS NOT FOUND IN THE VEDA,	23
V.	WHAT IS IN THE VEDA—SIN,	37
VI.	IMMORTALITY AND THE FUTURE STATE OF MAN,	47
VII.	WINE, SOMA, AND DRINKING,	62
VIII.	SACRIFICE,	73
IX.	MONOTHEISM OR POLYTHEISM?	94
X.	RELATION OF THE WORSHIPPERS TO THE GODS, AND THEIR FAITH IN THEM,	136
XI.	INCARNATION, MEDIATION, AND AGNI,	146
XII.	WOMEN, POLYGAMY, AND POLYANDRY,	157
XIII.	PRIESTS AND RISHIS,	169
XIV.	THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN,	196
XV.	MIRACLES, CREATION, DELUGE, ETC.,	211
XVI.	CONCLUSION—	
	(1) THE DEMERITS OF THE VEDA,	224
	(2) TRACES OF THE PRIMITIVE RELIGION,	241

INDEX, 256

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THE VEDIC RELIGION.

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

BY the Vedic Religion I mean the religion practised by the Rishis or composers of the Vedas, and more particularly of the hymns of the Rig-Veda, which are admitted by all the adherents of the various Hindu systems to be the primary and infallible authority in all matters of their religion. Nay more, they are the real theogony of the whole Aryan race, and, as such, are of special interest to Teuton, Kelt, Greek, and Hindu alike. I include in the Vedic Religion all doctrines and religious opinions that can be logically inferred to have been in the creed of the composers of the Rig-Veda hymn-book or *Sanhita*.

It is of the greatest importance that all who are interested in the Christianization of India, and especially all those who are daily labouring among professed Hindus with this object, should acquaint

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themselves with the Vedic Religion. For even those who are at the present moment recognised as the spiritual guides of the people, those whose influence for good or evil is even now immense, especially in villages and country districts, from which many of the most promising Hindu students come, are believers in the supreme authority of the Vedas. Everything, whether founded on individual opinion, or local custom, or Tantras or Puranas, nay, even on the law-books of Manu, must be given up by the consistent orthodox Hindu as soon as it can be proved to be in direct conflict with a single sentence of the Veda. 'On that point,' says Mr. Müller, 'there can be no controversy.'[1] 'The authority of the Veda, in respect to all religious questions,' says the same authority, writing in 1878, 'is as great in India now as it has ever been. To the vast majorities of the orthodox believers, the Veda forms still the highest and only infallible authority, quite as much as the Bible with us, or the Koran with the Mahomedans.'[2]

Not only do we meet men in Calcutta, and I have no doubt many more in other towns of India, who excuse themselves from becoming Christians, nay, even from taking the claims of Christianity into serious consideration, by professing to believe in the Veda and the Vedic Religion; but there are in our own days those, among the educated and the English-speaking, who study the Veda in connection with our

[1] Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 153. [2] *Ibid.* p. 167.

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University, or who have heard of the high position given to it[1] in the University curriculum, who publicly, to the rejection of modern Hinduism, advocate the Vedic Religion as the only true religion, or, at any rate, the proper religion for Hindus, and who profess to stand on the same platform with Pundit Dayananda Sarasvati and his American friends of the Theosophic Society. There is a peculiar charm for the patriotic Hindu in such advocacy. We need not wonder, therefore, what the newspapers inform us, that the people rush in crowds to hear the learned Pundit descanting on 'the lofty exalted position the country occupied in Vedic times, some six thousand years ago, when,' the Pundit said, 'there was perfect peace and happiness in the country, there being no dissensions as to the form of religion, and all men were united by the common ties of a universal religion and fellow-feeling.' When such fanciful pictures are publicly and authoritatively given, it is desirable that the missionary be able to give the true, and to prove the truth of it by reference to chapter and verse of the Hindu's own scriptures.

The early Jesuit missionaries, Robert de Nobili and his colleagues, felt a knowledge of the Vedas to be of such vital importance to them, as engaged in the promulgation of Christianity, that they not only made them a special study, but with the view of using the immense influence these Vedas had over

[1] It is one of the text-books for the M.A. in Sanskrit.

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the common people, in the interests of Christianity they set about to fabricate an imitation of them which they called the *Esur Veda*, and which they contended was a relic of the same Vedic times and possessed of the same inspiration. The motive and the end we may admire, while we detest the means.

The study of the Veda is interesting in itself from the light which it casts, not only on the earliest known condition of the Hindus in India, but of the great Aryan family, from which Kelt and Saxon, as well as Parsee and Hindu, alike have descended. The Veda belongs not to India only, but to the whole Indo-European family of the human race.

It throws an immense blaze of light on almost every language spoken, or regarded sacred, from St. Kilda in the Atlantic to Singapore on the confines of the Pacific Ocean; and it proves the common origin of all the many various peoples speaking these. It goes far, besides, to prove where the original seat of this great family was, and what the nature or character of their religion before they had separated, and what their character and their appearance as a white-complexioned people, as contrasted with the dark or black coloured peoples whom they conquered or against whom they carried on continual wars.

We ought also to bear in mind that the position which the classical languages of Greece and Rome and the ancient Saxon occupy as regards their influence in the formation of the modern languages of

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England, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain, is the same position which the Sanskrit occupies in India in regard to Bengali, Mahratta, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Urya, and Pushto; yet, as regards their present position and active influence, Sanskrit occupies a much higher and more important one, inasmuch as Sanskrit literature is really the literature of all India—those in the vernaculars being of very minor relative importance. In Europe it is all the other way. The modern language is to each several nation of infinitely greater importance in the matter of literature and of religion than the classical; besides, the Veda has influenced all other Sanskrit literature much more than the Bible has the literature of Europe.

The Rig-Veda is the oldest Sanskrit book hitherto discovered, or even alluded to, in all Sanskrit literature. With the exception of some small portions of the Bible, it is the oldest book in the world, and it is contemporaneous with much of the oldest in the Bible. While the Israelites under the auspicious leadership of Moses were 'sounding the loud timbrel over Egypt's dark sea,' the Aryan emigrants from the high lands of Central Asia were singing the praises of Agni and Indra on the banks of the Sarasvati, in the hymns of the Rig-Veda.

It consists of two quite distinct works, called respectively *Mantras* or *Sanhita* and *Brahmanas*. The *mantras*, prayers or praise, are embodied in 1017 hymns or 10,500 verses or *ricktas* (laudations), hence.

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the name Rick or Rig-Veda, composed by some twenty or thirty different authors called *Rishis*. The hymns are divided into ten Books or *Mandalas*, and those composed by each Rishi are placed in each book together, and so arranged that those addressed to Agni come first, those to Indra next, and then those to the other divinities promiscuously. At least this is the order in the first *Mandalas*.

The *Brahmanas* consist of ritualistic precepts for the chanting of these hymns during the sacrifice. They are in prose, and are spoken very disparagingly of by European critics. Max Müller says that 'No one would have supposed that at so early a period, and in so primitive a state of society, there could have risen up a literature which for pedantry and downright absurdity can hardly be matched anywhere. . . . It is most important for the historian that he should know how soon the fresh and healthy growth of a nation can be blighted by priestcraft and superstition. It is most important that we should know that nations are liable to these epidemics in their youth as well as in their dotage. These works (the Brahmanas) deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the raving of madmen. They will disclose to a thoughtful eye the ruins of faded grandeur, the memories of noble aspirations. But let us only try to translate these works into our own language, and we shall feel astonished that human language and human thought

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should ever have been used for such purposes.'[1] The hymns are worse treated by the old Sanskrit annotators, than the Bible was by Origen and other allegorists.

These two works are frequently spoken of under the one name of Rig-Veda. We propose to deal only with the first or *Mantras*, discarding altogether the *Brahmanas* as of comparatively little interest, though professedly founded on the former. The first is not only the Rig-Veda, but *the* Veda. For though there are *four* Vedas, the other three are so closely dependent on the Rig-Veda, that the three may be spoken of as appendices to, commentaries of, extracts or selections from the Rig-Veda, made for various purposes. The first of these three, the Yajur-Veda, consists largely of the Rig-Veda hymns arranged for the usual sacrifices; the second, or Sama-Veda, is also largely a reproduction of the same hymns transposed and arranged for the Soma ceremonies, performed by a different class of priests from those for whom the preceding Veda was compiled. The greatest number of its hymns are taken from one book (the ninth) of the Rig-Veda, which is in praise of the Soma plant. The remaining Veda—the Atharva, to which the name Veda is sometimes denied—is the most recent. It is more original than the other two, and consequently more interesting. Though it repeats a good many of the Rig-Veda hymns, it has many altogether new ones. It is the 'Cursing Veda,' so called because

[1] Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 389.

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it consists largely of magical spells and incantations for imprecating or averting evils. It has to do greatly with demons or evil spirits who troubled our early ancestors. It marks the transition between the comparatively simpler faith of the earlier times and the grosser superstitions of the later periods. It is full of imprecations on enemies, prayers against diseases, wild beasts and deadly reptiles, as well as prayers for luck in gambling, etc. Babu C. C. Mookerji says that 'the general character of this Veda is marked by shallow pedantry and dry grandiloquence.' The other two are mere recasts of the Rig-Veda.

It will thus be seen why we lay so much importance on the Rig-Veda Sanhita.

We know next to nothing, save their names, of most of the authors of these hymns. Mythical or legendary stories are told of some. We know almost as little of the conditions under which they were composed and sung. We say 'composed' rather than written, for we have every reason to believe that they were not written for many hundreds of years after they were composed, inasmuch as no alphabet or art of writing was known to their authors. Not the slightest allusion has been discovered in them to writing or alphabet, or to any writing instrument.[1] It is generally agreed that they were composed about 1200 years before Christ, that is, about 3000 years

[1] The earliest written characters existing in the country are the inscriptions of Asoka, of date about the 3d century B.C.

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ago, though the data on which this date is founded are very unsatisfactory to the general reader. The argument seems to be this. Alexander the Great visited India, say, in 331 B.C. Now every hymn in the Rig-Veda is in Saunaka's Index, and he was anterior to the invasion of Alexander. The Sutras, belonging to the same period as Saunaka, prove the previous existence of every chapter of the Brahmanas; and every hymn in the Rig-Veda was anterior to the Brahmanas, and the Rig-Veda hymns are of two or more different periods. In these various books we have very distinct Sanskrit dialects, which must have been of very different ages, each requiring, say, at least 200 years for its full development. The Sutras are supposed to have extended from 600 to 200 B.C. The Brahmanas would have required other 200 years, bringing up their date to 800 B.C. Add other 200 for the later hymns and other 200 for the older, and you have 1200 B.C.[1] When we regard them, as they really are, the sole relics of that time and age of the Aryan race, they look like a small island in the midst of an immense boundless ocean, from which a hazy view can be got of one or two other islands on the horizon the possessions of quite distinct races. A modern writer says that 'in reading them "we stand in the presence of a veiled life," on which nothing external of record or monument throws light.'[2] This

[1] Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 572.

[2] Dean Church's *Sacred Poetry of Early Religions*, p. 14.

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is not absolutely true. For just as they throw light on the subsequent Sanskrit literature of India, on the Zend-a-Vesta of the Parsis, and the Tripitakas of the Buddhists, as also on the other languages of the Aryan family and on the lately-discovered inscriptions of Assyria, so these latter reflect more or less light on them.

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II.

THEORIES OF INSPIRATION AND REVELATION.

HOW did the Vedas happen to possess the authority among the Hindus which they have had for so many ages? This they obtained partly because of their comparatively intrinsic value, largely from their connection with religion, and more particularly from the interested motives and actions of the Brahmins, to whom they had come to be sources of livelihood. Dr. Muir, who has collected a mass of information on this point, remarks that 'as the authors of the hymns, the earliest of them at least, lived in an age of simple conceptions and of spontaneous and childlike devotion, we shall find that though some of them appear in conformity with the spirit of their times to have regarded their compositions as in a certain degree the result of divine inspiration, their primeval and elementary ideas on this subject form a strong contrast to the artificial and systematic definitions of the later scholastic writers.'[1] I shall state a few of these. The Vishnu and Bhagvata Puranas represent the four Vedas as

[1] Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, Part iii. p. vii.

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issuing from the mouth of Brahma at the creation. The Vrihad Aranyaka Upanishad describes them as the breath of Brahma; Hari Vansa speaks of them as produced from the holiest verse in the Vedas, a verse which is still used in ordinary Hindu worship, and which is called the *Gayatri*.[1] The same author describes them as created by Brahma. The author of the Mahabharata calls 'Sarasvati the mother of the Vedas.' In one passage in the Vedas themselves, they are said to have been derived from the mystical personal victim Purusha, and another makes them spring from Time. In a third passage they are declared to have sprung from the leavings of the sacrifice. These three passages are in hymns added after the rest had been composed and had acquired some authority from their antiquity. In Manu, they are described as the *second* manifestation of the pure principle (Sattva-Guna), while Brahma is one of its *first* manifestations. In the Vishnu Purana, which, as we have seen, represents them as issuing from the mouth of Brahma at the creation, they are said to be eternal and one with the god Vishnu. Manu describes them as 'the eternal eye of the patriarchs, of gods and of men,' 'supporting all beings,' 'the refuge of the ignorant as well as of the understanding,' 'the refuge of those who are seeking after

[1] Rig-Veda, iii. 62, 10, *i.e.* the third Book or *Mandala*, 62d hymn, and the tenth *Rickta* or verse. Hereafter we shall simply write the figures thus—iii. 62, 10—whenever we have to refer to a text in the Rig-Veda. See below, pp. 93, 235.

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Paradise, as well as of those who are desiring after Infinity.' 'As a clod thrown into a great lake is dissolved when it touches the water, so does all sin sink in the triple Veda.' The Atharva-Veda was not at the time acknowledged as a genuine Veda. Madhava defines the Veda as the work which alone reveals the supernatural means of attaining future felicity; he explains that *males* only belonging to the three superior castes are competent to study its contents. Such theories led to most absurd myths, such as that given in the Vishnu Purana, iii. 5, of a disobedient pupil being ordered to give back all the knowledge he had received, who at once vomited the Yajur Veda. Forthwith the other pupils assumed the form of partridges (*tittiri*) and picked it up from the ground in its several dirtied texts. Hence this Veda is called the *Taittiriya Krishna* [black] *Yajur Veda.*

The contention of modern critics is more in accord with modern reasoning. The *rishis* or saints, whose names the several hymns bear, are proved by the contents of the hymns to have been their real authors. Besides, numerous events which have occurred *in time* are undoubtedly mentioned in the Vedas. This is admitted by Sankara, the great religious reformer and teacher of the Vedanta Philosophy. These Rishis regarded undoubtedly the hymns as their own compositions, or the compositions of their forefathers. They distinguished the old and new among them, and

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they described themselves as the *makers, fabricators,* or *generators* of the hymns, as we shall see below. It is also admitted that in some of the more recent of them a superhuman character or superhuman faculties are ascribed to the earlier Rishis, just as there are similar passages to be met with in Hesiod and Homer. There are other passages in which a mystical, magical, or supernatural efficacy is ascribed to the hymns. But there are others again in which the authors complain of their own ignorance.[1] There is no doubt that in course of time these hymns came to be looked upon in a light very different from that in which they were originally regarded. This arose from a sense or feeling of an immeasurable, incalculable time having elapsed since their composition, a time that had made such changes in the language in which they were thought, that the very best scholars and philosophers found them unintelligible. Yet their most ancient MSS. extant are not much more than half the age of our Christian MSS. The oldest of the Veda MSS. dates no further back than A.D. 1000; while the oldest of our Christian MSS. goes back to 350 A.D., if not indeed earlier.

One of the most common objections which the educated Hindu is inclined to urge against the Christian advocate, is that founded on Book Revelation, and yet, though apparently foreign to the Teutonic,

[1] i. 20, 1; 31, 18; 61, 16; 117, 25; ii. 39, 8; iii. 30, 20; iv. 6, 11; 16, 20, etc. See Dr. Muir's *Sanskrit Texts,* Part iii. pp. 232–244.

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Keltic, Greek, and Roman branches of the great Aryan family, the idea is as familiar to the Parsi and Hindu branches as it is to the Shemitic family. Still, as we have seen, their theories of revelation and inspiration are totally different from those of the Christian, whether verbal or plenary-verbal. The Christian idea is most intimately associated with the written book, the *verbum* or word as written; theirs, at least the Hindus, with it as spoken or uttered. The word *Veda* and the word *Sruti*, by which the most sacred works in Hindu literature are characterised, mean the uttered or *unwritten knowledge*, represented as having issued like breath from the Self-Existent, and been *heard*, and communicated, not to a single person, but to a class of men called Rishis or inspired sages. This *knowledge* (Veda) they transmitted, not in writing, but by the constant oral repetition of Brahmin to Brahmin. When in course of time it was committed to writing, neither the copying nor the reading of it was encouraged. The reading of the Bible and of the Koran is regarded as a sacred duty by Christians and Mussulmans. To the Hindu masses the Veda was a sealed book, even after it had been committed to writing; and to this day it is entirely unknown, to all intents and purposes, even to most of the learned orthodox Hindus. Not a single copy was known to exist in all Bengal fifty years ago. The only parties well up in it seem to be European scholars, a few students of the Anglo-

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Indian Universities, and a few natives who have come under the influence of European scholarship. I have, over and over again, tested the knowledge of English educated Hindus and also of learned Pundits, and found all alike practically ignorant of the Rig-Veda Sanhita; yet, singularly enough, it is professedly held in the highest veneration by all, and more so by those who are most ignorant of its contents. Its inspiration is regarded so self-convincing, as Monier Williams remarks, 'as to require no proof, and to be entirely beyond the province of reason or argument.'[1] 'It is,' he elsewhere adds, 'at the very root of Hinduism, and is indeed ingrained in the whole Hindu system.'[2]

The inspiration claimed for these hymns by the Rishis themselves is expressed in such words as these:—'They [the Rishis] were associates of the gods; found out the hidden light and brought forth the dawn with sincere hymns.' 'The singers seek out the 1000 branched mystery through the union of their hearts.' Their 'hymns are of kin to the god and attract his heart;' for 'Agni is himself a poet.' 'The thoughtful gods produce these hymns.' The Rishis 'prepare the hymn with the heart, the mind, the understanding.' 'They fashion it as a

[1] M. Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 8.

[2] M. Williams' *Hinduism*, p. 18. See R.-V. vii. 76, 4; vii. 33, 9; viii. 12, 31; 13, 36; vi. 14, 2; x. 61, 7; i. 61, 2; i. 130, 6; v. 29, 15; x. 39, 14; vii. 94; i. 116; x. 116; i. 109, 1; i. 165, 15; ii. 39, 8; i. 41, 7; 43, 1; 48, 2.

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skilful workman a car;' 'adorn it as a beautiful garment, as a bride for her husband.' 'They generate it from the soul as rain is born from a cloud;' 'send it forth from the soul as wind drives the cloud;' 'launch it with praises as a ship on the sea.' 'Indra and Agni, . . . the clear understanding you have given me is given by no one else; and so gifted, I have composed this hymn to you, intimating my wish for sustenance.' 'This hymn, Maruts, is for you, the work of a venerable author, capable of conferring delight by his laudations.' 'The Gritsamadas have composed their prayer, these praises, Aswins, for your exaltation.' Hymn i. 140, 11–13 runs: 'May this well-composed hymn be more agreeable to thee, O Agni, than an ill-composed one, nay more, even than an agreeable one. . . . Mayst thou, O Agni, applaud our hymn alone.'

From these it will be seen that the Rishis themselves do not generally claim a very high origin for their hymns, nor any inspiration, in the sense of a superhuman unerring guidance. In those hymns in which a divine assistance is claimed, it is necessary to bear in mind the great familiarity which the Rishis say they enjoyed with their gods. They represent them as their boon companions at the drinking of the soma juice; and as seated down together with them on the kusi grass.

But it is time that we introduced the reader to the contents of this most ancient of hymn-books.

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III.

THE CONTENTS.

AS to the contents of the Rig-Veda, that which strikes the general reader on opening the book, almost anywhere, is the 'tedious repetitions, redundant epithets, and far-fetched conceits,'[1] 'many tedious repetitions and puerilities,'[2] as M. Williams calls them. One meets occasionally with almost pure gold, 'high morality, often expressed in impressive language worthy of Christianity itself,' side by side 'with precepts implying a social condition scarcely compatible with the lowest grade of culture and civilisation.'[3] In most works upon the Vedas, whether by Max Müller, Monier Williams, Dr. Banerjea, Dr. Wilson, H. H. Wilson, Dr. Muir, Colebrooke, etc., the writers 'restrict themselves to the best writings only,' *Indian Wisdom*, like grains of gold in hard quartz. Max Müller, cognisant to some extent of consequent evil results, remarks: 'Looking at many of the books that have lately been published

[1] M. Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 1.
[2] M. Williams' *Hinduism*, p. 19.
[3] M. Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 2.

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on the religions of the ancient world, I do not wonder that such a belief [as to their being full of primeval wisdom and religious enthusiasm, or at least of sound and simple moral teaching] should have been raised; but I have long felt that it was high time to dispel such illusions, and to place the study of the ancient religions of the world on a more real and sound, on a more truly historical basis.' After apologizing for the previous state of matters, he adds: 'Whether I am myself one of the guilty or not, I cannot help calling attention to the real mischief that has been done, and is still being done, by the enthusiasm of those pioneers who have opened the first avenues through the bewildering forest of the sacred literature of the East.'[1] 'What we want here, as everywhere else, is the truth and the whole truth; and if the whole truth must be told, it is that however radiant the dawn of religious thought, it is not without its dark clouds, its chilling colds, its noxious vapours.' 'I confess it has been for many years a problem to me, ay, and to a great extent is so still (1879), how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent.'[2] Hence he argues the necessity of giving complete translations of the original texts. A photographic

[1] *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I. pp. ix. x.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. xi. xii.

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album containing beautiful pictures of Government House, the Imperial Museum, the University, the Cathedral, the Post Office, the Town Hall, etc., is apt to give to a stranger a very false impression of the city itself. So do extracts from the Veda. 'No one who collects and publishes such extracts can resist, no one at all events, as far as I know,' adds Max Müller, 'has ever resisted the temptation of giving what is beautiful, or it may be, what is strange and startling, and leaving out what is commonplace, tedious, or it may be repulsive, or, lastly, what is difficult to construe and understand.'

The same writer had, twelve years before, strongly recommended to missionaries that, instead of looking only for points of difference, they should 'look out more anxiously for any common ground, any spark of the true light that may still be revived, any altar that may be dedicated afresh to the true God.' I think the missionary should do both. He should know, if possible, the whole truth. The sparks will be collected by the men who collect 'Indian Wisdom' and 'Sacred Texts,' like Monier Williams and Dr. John Muir; or men who, like Pundit Dayananda Sarasvati and his followers, go in for the blessedness, the peace and contentment of Vedic times, and the absolute perfection of the Vedic religion. The Indian missionary will meet with many such in our public gardens, our bazaars, and in our colleges, who profess

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to despise the Christian religion, and who quote such of its texts as they think they may deftly use against it. It is well that the missionary be able to answer the fool according to his folly, take his own weapons and use them against himself. But, as a rule, it is better far to follow the apostle's example, and quote approvingly the texts that agree with the Christian doctrine which he happens to preach, and to appeal to his Hindu audiences in the words of the great apostle to the Gentile polytheists of old, 'As certain also of your own poets have said.'

In examining into the contents of the Veda, we have to do with facts, not with speculations, in answer to the question *What*, not to the questions *How* or *Why*, or *When*. The questions which we try to answer are—What was really the state of things at the time? What was the creed then believed in?[1] What was the religion then practised? There may be hints or allusions met with throughout these hymns as to an anterior or shadows of a posterior state of things or of beliefs. The object I have set before me is not to speculate on any such, or as to the origin or developments of the then state of matters. I confine myself also as much as possible to questions bearing directly on their religion. There are found in these hymns, references to domestic and social, political and scientific matters, into which I will not enter. The hymns are all professedly

[1] See Gladstone's article on the *Olympic* v. the *Solar Theory*.

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religious, and almost all of them are really so. They refer primarily to the state of religious feelings, and beliefs, and practices of the people. To these I wish to confine my remarks.

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IV.

WHAT IS NOT FOUND IN THE VEDA.

BEFORE indicating more particularly what *is* in the Veda, I would say a few words as to what is *not* in it, or rather what has not been discovered in it. But we must bear in mind that the absence of all allusion to such does not prove their non-existence. There is no direct allusion to the Sabbath in the Jewish Psalms, and the name of God does not occur in the Book of Esther. Still the non-existence of all reference in the 10,500 *mantras* of the Rig-Veda, constituting the entire literature of a nation for two or three hundred years and the work of some thirty authors, to such things as idols, temples, etc., makes it highly probable that there were no idols or temples. I am not aware that there is any allusion to the division of the month into weeks of seven days each—unless it be in the seven ruddy horses of the chariot of Surya, the Sun; or that there is any allusion to the seventh day being specially sacred. Hence I think there is a very strong probability there were no such divisions of time in the days of the Rig-Veda. The names by which these days are now known in India

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are of comparatively modern origin.[1] 'It is well known,' remarks Max Müller, in his chapter of Accidents in his *Comparative Theology*, 'that the names of the seven days of the week are derived from the names of the planets, and it is equally well known that in Europe the system of weeks and week-days is comparatively of very modern origin. It was not a Greek, nor a Roman, nor a Hindu, but a Jewish or Chaldean invention. The Sabbath (Sabbata) was known and kept at Rome in the first century B.C. with many superstitious practices. . . . It is curious that we find the seventh day, the Sabbath, even under its new pagan name, as Saturday, mentioned by Roman and Greek authors, before the names of the other days of the week make their appearance. After the names of the week-days had once been settled, we have no difficulty in tracing their migration towards the East and towards the West. The Hindus had their own peculiar system of reckoning days and months; but they adopted at a later time the foreign system of counting by weeks of seven days, and assigning a presiding planetary deity to each of the seven days,' corresponding to the Latin or Roman arrangement, which was Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus. This translated into Sanskrit became Sani, Ravi, Soma, Bhauma, Buddha, Brihaspati, and Sukra; and into

[1] For a different view, see *Catholic Presbyterian*, March 1881, p. 204, or *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, April 1866.

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Teutonic or English it became Saturn, Sun, Moon, Tiu, Wustan or Odin, Thunar or Thor, and Freyja.

But to proceed: there is no history, no narrative, no biography, no chronology, no science as such, in the Veda, though there are allusions bearing on all these. There is no religious creed, no system of belief, or indeed of rites or ceremonies, referred to, still less arranged and formulated, in the hymns of the Rig-Veda. Nor am I aware that any attempt has hitherto been made to analyze the Rig-Veda with the view of formulating any such. Certain points have been very thoroughly discussed, and much learning has been devoted to the gathering of texts to illustrate them. In the following pages I shall consequently be able to speak very positively as to the existence or non-existence of some things, and very fully on some points, but on others very falteringly, while there are others again of which I shall be able to say nothing.

I proceed, then, to mention what has not been discovered in the Rig-Veda as regards religion.

There has not been found in it any allusion to the present most popular of the Hindu gods and goddesses; such as Siva, Mahadeva, Vishnu, Brahma, Durga, Kali, Ganesh, Kartick, Rama, Krishna, Narayana, Gunga, and Rudra. If any of them be alluded to, it is as occupying a very subordinate position to that now occupied by them, or with characters totally different from those they possess in later writings.

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Gunga is twice[1] referred to in the Veda, but simply in the words 'like the elevated bank of the Ganges,' and 'accept, O Gunga (Ganges), Yamuna (Jumna), Sarasvati, etc., my praise;' while the rivers Indus and Sarasvati are frequently referred to as divinities to be worshipped. Rudra is referred to more than once, but not as another name for Siva, who was then unknown, but as the god of the roaring tempest. He is spoken of as the 'braided-haired destroyer of heroes;' while Vishnu was the god of the brilliant firmament. Brihaspati was not the planet Jupiter, which he now is, but the 'Lord of prayers,' another name of Agni. Brahma appears simply as the prayer, the mantra or sacrifice, or the 'Lord of prayers.' The Vishnu of the Veda has a very different character from that of the member of the Hindu Triad. As regards *Rudra*, see below, p. 188.

There is no allusion to any temple, big or little, or to any special place of worship, church, mundir, synagogue, or mosque, or to any house for the gods, specially consecrated to their use. No allusion has been discovered to idol or image of wood, mud, stone, silver, or gold, made or graven with man's hand, though it is quite possible, if not indeed probable, that idols were beginning to be used, inasmuch as several of the members of the imaginary bodies of some of the gods are rather minutely described, such as Indra's nose, lips, chins, Rudra's limbs, Varuna's coat, the Maruts' gods (images?).

[1] R.-V., vi. 45, 31, Wilson's, vol. iii. p. 465; and x. 75, 5.

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There are no fixed genealogies of the gods or goddesses, or settled marriages between them, recognised with any definiteness. The relations are a good deal confounded by different Rishis. The son is sometimes the father, the daughter the mother, if not the grandmother; the mother in one hymn is the wife in another, and the husband in one the brother in another.

Though the worship of the sun, of the moon, and of the day and night firmament is quite apparent, there is no worship, singularly enough, of the stars or planets, individually or collectively; and that of the moon is not at all prominent.

The Indo-Aryans of the Vedic times apparently did not worship fetishes of wood or stone, or any of those things described by Max Müller as fully *tangible*, as distinguished from the *semi-tangible*, such as trees, mountains, rivers, the earth, and the sea; and the *intangible*, such as the sky, the sun, and the dawn; unless we regard the worship of the accompaniments to the sacrifice, such as the mortar and pestle, the soma juice and the sacrificed horse, the prayer and the kusi-grass, the doors, the sacrificial posts, and implements of war, as tangible fetishes worshipped. The adoration of the Rishis was generally directed towards the semi-tangible and the intangible. Max Müller adds: Tangible objects are 'hardly represented at all among the so-called deities of the Rig-Veda. Stones, bones, shells, herbs, and

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all the other so-called fetishes are simply absent in the old hymns, though they appear in more modern hymns, particularly those of the Atharva-Veda. . . . But when we come to the second class, the case is very different. Almost every one of the objects which we defined as semi-tangible meets us among the so-called deities of the Veda.' He quotes passages showing that the winds, the trees, the rivers, the mountains, the heavens, and the earth, were all worshipped by the Rishis of the Rig-Veda.[1]

There is no mention of any human religious leader like Moses, Mahomed, Zoroaster, Joseph Young, or Keshub Chander Sen. Each hymn-writer was his own religious guide, and led himself alone.

There is no distinct teaching of Pantheism in the hymns of the Veda. There are two or three mantras that may have proved germs which suggested the idea to subsequent authors. But the whole spirit of the hymns is opposed to the system as such.

No reference to metempsychosis or transmigration of the soul has been discovered in the Veda, while on the other hand there are the clearest proofs that animals were used in sacrifice, and partaken of as food.[2] The ancient Indians were unquestionably beef-eaters, and this itself is a presumption against

[1] Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 198; *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, January 1880, p. 29.

[2] Rig-Veda, i. 61, 12; i. 164, 43; vi. 2, 8; 39, 1. Wilson's Rig-Veda, vol. i. p. 165, and vol. iii. p. 453. Dr. Wilson's *India 3000 Years Ago*, p. 69.

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the doctrine of metempsychosis being believed in. There is no allusion, either, to the doctrine of the final absorption of the soul of man into the substance of the divinity. The deification of the sons of Angiras, of the Ribhus who are represented as the sons of Sudhanvan, and of the seven Rishis as the seven stars of Ursa Major or the Great Bear, is inconsistent with both doctrines. Dr. Wilson of Bombay describes well the degrading effect metempsychosis has on the human mind. The attempt to raise the brutes to the level of man results in degrading man to the level of brutes. According to this doctrine, a man may be to-day an intelligent rational being, to-morrow he may be a chattering monkey; to-day his mother may be a tender-hearted woman, to-morrow she may be a ravening wolf; to-day his son may be a studious youth, next year he may be a stupid buffalo; and his daughter may be to-day a playful girl, but next week she may be a skipping goat. The querulous crow watching to snatch a bone off his table may be his own deceased father; the hungry cat his own departed grandmother; that raging bear his quondam brother; and that crawling serpent his late sister. Of this doctrine, so prevalent now and so degrading, there is no trace to be found in the hymns of the Rig-Veda.

There is no trace of asceticism, as formally practised, now in India; no regularly organized priesthood is to be found in the Veda, not at least in the older

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hymns; nor is there any trace of any ecclesiastical authority or church organization. They seemed to have had only 'the church in the house,' and it was perfectly independent of all others.

There were no sacred places to which the people went on pilgrimages in these days. There was nothing specially sacred about Juggernath or Boidanath, Gangoutry or Jumnotry, Kasi or Pryaga, Brindabun or Mathura, Gya, Dwarka or Tribeni, Hurdwar, Tarakeswar or Kalighat. The Aryans had not been sufficiently long in the country for any place to acquire the odour of sanctity from its supposed connection with any fact in the imaginary history of their many gods and goddesses. There was not any sacredness attached to the Ganges; and though some other rivers had been deified, just as the earth, the clouds, and the dawn had been, we do not learn that bathing in their waters was regarded as a religious act, or that it was recommended as efficacious in purifying the soul from sin, or delivering it from evil.

In those days there were no hospitals for the sick or the dying, whether man or beast. There were no infirmaries, asylums, or orphanages. The Vedic religion did not consist in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, or in keeping themselves unspotted from the world. It did not consist in feeding the hungry, even hungry Brahmans, or in supporting the poor, or in nursing the sick, or in

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educating the ignorant, or in helping the helpless. There were no schools of the priests or prophets, no pathshalahs for the young, or any Sunday schools, no Sanskrit toles, or universities; there were no books, sacred or profane; no writing or arithmetic, save the mental; no astronomy beyond identifying a few stars and calculating the age of the moon and of the year of twelve lunar months and the intercalary month.

There were no missionaries, or propagandists or proselytizers of any kind; no efforts to bring over to their own religion the aboriginal inhabitants of the land. There was, on the other hand, the most deadly hostility cherished towards them, and every effort was made to exterminate those who were not Aryans and sacrificed not to the Aryans' gods.

There were no preachers, clergymen, lecturers, or professors attached to secular or theological seminaries, for there were none such. I do not remember to have read even of lawyers or engineers, though there were houses and cities for the latter to look after, as well as rights and disputes for the former to settle. There were, however, 'wise poets' and 'eloquent satirists' (i. 141, 7).

There were no fairs or melas at which multitudes attended on specially appointed days. There were no large congregations or assemblies for worship. It was rather individual or domestic. There were no holy days or holidays, or saints' days. Neither Agni nor Indra, nor any of the other gods, had any days

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specially set apart for their worship. There were no Durgah, Kali, or Lucksmi Pujahs then.

We find no encouragement given to child marriage, or any text indicating its prevalence. And there is no allusion to the dreadful rite of Sati, or the burning of living widows on their late husbands' funeral pyres. A passage in the Rig-Veda used to be quoted by Brahmins in support of this rite, but it proves only their own wickedness. The Brahminical translation of the passage, as given by Colebrooke, is, 'Om! let these women, not to be widowed, good wives adorned with collyrium, holding clarified butter, consign themselves to the fire, immortal, not childless, nor husbandless, well adorned with gems, let them pass into the fire, whose element is water.' The correct translation of the passage has been proved, by Wilson and others, to be, 'May these women, who are not widows, draw near with oil and butter. Let those who are mothers go first to the altar without sorrow, but decked with fine jewels.' The false translation had been got by the change of a single syllable, the substitution of *agneh* for *agre*, so as to make the phrase 'go first to the altar' read 'go into the fire.' Max Müller, in noticing the change, says: 'This is perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood.'[1] The words of the Veda refer

[1] Oxford Essays, 1856, p. 22; Wilson's Article, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. xvi. p. 201; and Dr. Wilson's *India* 3000 *Years Ago*, p. 66.

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not to the bereaved widow, but to the visit of condolence to her by unbereaved female friends.

There is no prohibition of the marriage of adult females, or any injunction in favour of the marriage of girls before they arrive at puberty. The following text seems to indicate the opposite state of things: —'As a virtuous maiden growing old in the same dwelling with her parents (claims from them her support), so come I to thee for wealth.' The story of the Rishi Syavâswas falling in love with the Raja's daughter, and qualifying himself to the satisfaction of the mother before he got her, would seem to indicate that the daughter was something more than a mere child. There has been found, as far as I am aware, no instance of the remarriage of widows, or any text prohibiting it; nor am I aware of the Brahmans having quoted any mantra of the Rig-Veda in support of the present prohibition. Widows seem, however, to have been married to their brothers-in-law. See x. 40, 2; compare Deut. xxv. 5 and Matt. xxii. 24 ff.

There is no prohibition of foreign travel; on the contrary, there are the clearest references to voyages by sea as well as journeys by land. The absence of caste distinctions would imply the absence of such prohibitions. Further, we must bear in mind that the Aryans were themselves strangers in a strange land. They were at the time on a great conquering expedition, far away from their late home.

That there were no caste, in the modern Hindu

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sense, is clear from the following considerations:— First, there is no allusion to any defilement as resulting from touching anything ceremonially unclean, or from eating or drinking any particular kind of food, cooked by any one, or from any vessel becoming unclean by being touched by any one. Not a single mantra can be quoted, as far as I am aware, indicating that a person could be so defiled. Further, the story of the origin of the four castes is not found in the Veda; nor indeed was the god Brahma, from whose body they are said to have come, sufficiently developed to become a basis for such a myth. A text is, however, referred to in support of the caste system and of this story. It runs:

'With Purusha as victim, they performed
A sacrifice. When they divided him,
How did they cut him up? What was his mouth?
What were his arms? And what his thigh and feet?
The Brahman was his mouth, the kingly soldier
Was made his arms, the husbandman his thighs,
The servile Sudra issued from his feet.'[1]

Here there is no allusion to the god Brahma, and the Brahman is said to have been the mouth of the

[1] R.-V., x. 90; see below, p. 84. Emerson, in his short poem on Brahma, represents the Hindu god with greater literalness than possibly he was aware of:

'I am the doubter, and the doubt
And I the hymn the Brahman sings.'

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sacrificed victim, instead of to have issued from the mouth of the living god. The text, which is a comparatively modern one, proves that there were four different classes of people then, but nothing more. Brahma, in the neuter gender, in the Vedic language, means 'prayer,' and Brahma, in the masculine, means 'he-of-prayer.' Agni, the god of fire and sacrifice, is the Brahma, the god of prayer. The modern Brahma is an invention of the ideal Vedanta, a system of Pantheism long posterior to the Vedas, and really designed to supersede them under the assumed name of the 'Aim' or 'End' (*anta*) of the Vedas.[1] There were no Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, or Sudras as *castes*, technically so called. The profession of priests was beginning to be recognised, and there were soldiers and agriculturists or the common people. The state of matters may be understood from the hymn addressed to the deified Aswins: 'Favour the prayer (*brahma*), favour the service; kill the Rakshasas, drive away the evil; . . . favour the power (*khatra*) and favour the manly strength; . . . . favour the cow (*dhenu*, the representative of property); and favour the people (or house, *visha*).'[2] That the priests and Rishis of the Vedic times did not constitute a caste is clearly proved by their intermarrying with others

[1] Wilson's *India* 3000 *Years Ago*, p. 58, 53.

[2] R.-V., ix. 79, 16–17, is regarded as very important, being very incorrectly employed by modern Brahmins as justifying caste. We have the *Visha* of this text preserved in such words as *Wick*, *Woolwich*, etc. See Langlois, vol. iii. p. 311.

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outside their own professions, such as Rajas' daughters, they themselves belonging to various professions, and some of these Rishis being females. No honour or privilege is bestowed upon them because of their birth or their origin. There was no law or custom prohibiting inter-caste marriages.

In a review of Dr. Muir's *Texts* in *The Times*, 10th April 1858, by M. Müller, there occurs the following very emphatic assertion regarding caste: 'Does caste, as we find it in Manu and at the present day, form part of the religious teaching of the Vedas? We answer with a decided "No." There is no authority whatever in the Veda for the complicated system of castes; no authority for the offensive privileges claimed by the Brahmans; no authority for the degraded position of the Sudras. There is no law to prohibit the different classes of the people from living together, from eating and drinking together; no law to prohibit the marriage of people belonging to different castes; no law to brand the offspring of such marriages with an indelible stigma.'

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V.

WHAT IS IN THE VEDA—SIN.

IT is time that we should consider now the positive side of the matter, and introduce our readers to what is actually to be found in this most ancient of hymn-books.

I begin with the consideration of the Vedic views of morality, depravity and sin; and first, I notice that there is an undoubted acknowledgment of *sin*. The word occurs very often. 'This day, ye gods, with the rising sun, deliver us from heinous sin.' 'Whatever sin we have committed, O Indra, let us obtain the safe light of day: let not the long darkness come upon us.' ('Preserve us, O Agni, by knowledge, from sin.') ('Thou leadest the man who has followed wrong paths to acts of wisdom.') 'Deliver us from evil,' is a frequent prayer.[1] 'The gods are not to be trifled with.' 'They are with the righteous; they know man in their hearts.' 'They behold all things, and hear no prayers of the wicked.' 'May I, free from sin, propitiate Rudra.'

[1] i. 115, 6; ii. 27, 14; i. 36, 14; i. 35, 3, 11. Johnson's *Oriental Religions*, p. 119.

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'I have committed many faults, which do ye, O gods, correct, as a father his ill-behaving sons.' 'Far from me be bonds, far be sins.' 'May our sins be removed,' or 'repented of,' is the burden of a whole hymn.[1]

But all this is very general. No clear idea is given to us from reading such texts, or, indeed, from the whole book, as to the writers' notion of *sin* or of *repentance*, their real relation to god or the gods, and his or theirs to the law of right and wrong. The value of these and such-like terms must depend on the meaning put into them by the hymnists, not by us of the 19th century in our daily use of them. To confess sin in the abstract and to deprecate its consequences, to praise the righteous and to denounce the wicked, do not tell us much more than what we learn from a child's saying that such a person is bad, and such another is good. Dean Church[2] correctly remarks, that 'Of that moral conviction, that moral enthusiasm for goodness and justice, that moral hatred of wrong and evil, that zeal for righteousness, that anguish of penitence, which has elsewhere marked religious poetry, there is singularly little trace' in the Rig-Veda hymns. Baboo Ram Chundra Ghosha's little book, just published, seems to be very fair on the

[1] Johnson's *Oriental Religions*, p. 120. R.-V., vii. 32, 9; viii. 13, 15; ii. 33, 6; ii. 24, 5; i. 97.

[2] Dean Church's *Sacred Poetry of Early Religion*, p. 30. R.-V., i. 24, 15; 25, 1.

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whole. Not hiding or ignoring the defects, he makes most of the good points. He very justly remarks, that 'although Indo-Aryan mythology is extravagant and ridiculous, and has an icy coldness of meaning in it, yet those mythological dreams have an enduring symbolic value, and stand as data for primitive history.' 'The consciousness of sin,' he adds, 'is the prominent characteristic of the religion of the Veda.' It is said that the gods take away from man the *burden* of his sins,[1] a very common figure for sin; and so also is *darkness*; *bonds* consisting of an upper, a middle, and a lower rope; a *sea* or flood across which we have to go by means of a boat; and a defile through which we have to pass while surrounded with enemies.

Max Müller[2] is very express in asserting that not only is the doctrine of sin to be found there, but also 'the two ideas of justice and mercy, so contradictory to the human understanding, and yet so easily reconciled in every human heart. God has established the eternal laws of right and wrong, he punishes sin and rewards virtue, and yet the same God is willing to forgive; just, yet merciful; a judge and yet a father. Consider, for instance, the following lines:—"His path is easy and without

[1] R. C. Ghose's *Peep into the Vedic Age*, pp. 82, 93. R.-V., i. 162, 22; v. 82, 6; viii. 48, 9; ii. 27, 14; vii. 87, 7; x. 25, 3; iv. 12, 4; vi. 93, 7; 68, 8; 71, 3.

[2] Max Müller's *Chips*, vol. i. p. 39.

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thorns who does what is right."[1] And again, "Let man fear him who holds the four (dice), before he throws them down (*i.e.* God who holds the destinies of man in his hand): 'Let no man delight in evil words.'" Max Müller specially appeals, in proof of his position, to the well-known hymn to Varuna[2]—

'Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay.
Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
If I go trembling, like a cloud, driven by the wind,
Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
Through want of strength, thou strong and high god, I have gone on the wrong shore;
Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waves;
Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host; whenever we break thy law through thoughtlessness;
Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.'
and so on.

And again,—

'Aditi, Mitra, and also Varuna forgive, if we have committed any sin against you! may I obtain the wide fearless light, O Indra! May not the long

[1] R.-V., i. 41, 4; i. 41, 9; vii. 89; ii. 27, 14. *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 231. R.-V., i. 162, 22; i. 41, 9.
[2] vii. 89.

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darkness come over us! May Aditi grant us sinlessness.'

1. 'Wise and mighty are the works of him who stemmed asunder the wide firmaments. He lifted on high the bright and glorious heavens; he stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth.

2. 'Do I say this to my own self? How can I get near to Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with quiet mind, see him propitiated?

3. 'I ask Varuna, wishing to know this my sin: I go to ask the wise. The wise all tell me the same: Varuna it is who is angry with thee.

4. 'Was it an old sin, O Varuna, that thou wishest to destroy thy friend, who always praises thee? Tell me, thou unconquerable lord, and I will quickly turn to thee with praise, freed from sin.

5. '*Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and from those which we committed with our own bodies. Release Vasishtha,*[1] *O King, like a thief who has feasted on stolen cattle; release him like a calf from the rope.*

6. 'It was not our own doing, O Varuna, it was necessity, an intoxicating draught, passion, dice, thoughtlessness. The old is near to mislead the young; even sleep brings unrighteousness.

[1] Vasishtha was the Rishi who composed the hymn (vii. 86); vi. 52, 7; vii. 52, 2. A.-V., v. 30, 4; vi. 115, 1. R.-V., x. 37, 12. See Muir's *Metrical Translations*, p. 316; and Wilson's *Rig-Veda*. vol. iv. p. 23; Ex. xx. 5; Deut. v. 9.

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7. 'Let me, without sin, give satisfaction to the angry god, like a slave to the bounteous lord. The lord god enlightened the foolish; he, the wisest, leads his worshipper to wealth.

8. 'O Lord, Varuna, may this song go well to thy heart! May we prosper in keeping and acquiring! Protect us, O gods, always with your blessings!'

I do not think these hymns justify altogether Max Müller's conclusions concerning the old Rishis' sense of justice, or concerning God as Judge. They undoubtedly believed that the gods could punish iniquity or exercise mercy, and that they could forgive sins. But their sense of the demands of justice were very far from being clear or distinct. They had no idea *how* God could be just and justify the ungodly.

I think the 5th verse of the last of these hymns justifies us in asserting that they believed in the doctrine of *imputation* of sin, the children bearing the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation —the principle underlying the doctrine of 'original sin' as well as those of incarnation and substitution. Max Müller thinks that 'the consciousness of sin is a prominent feature in the religion of the Veda,' and 'the belief that the gods are able to take away from man the heavy burden of his sin.' But there is no attempt whatever to explain how the gods *can* take away sin.

There are few sins referred to as such. There are

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allusions to irreligion, impiety, and having neither rites nor sacrifice, as characteristic of their enemies, the Dasyus, the Rakshasas, and the Asuras. Sins against chastity are also referred to, as we shall see when we consider the Aryan's treatment of women; but these sins seem to be as characteristic of their gods as of themselves; and this is specially true of the sin of drunkenness. In support of the latter statement, I shall quote a few verses illustrative of Indra's character. 'Thy inebriety is most intense,' the Rishi addresses him; 'nevertheless thy acts for our good are most beneficent' (i. 17, 55). 'Thou, Indra, performer of good works, hast suddenly become of augmented vigour for the sake of drinking the libation, and maintaining seniority among the gods. Indra, thou art the object of praises; may these pervading Soma juices enter into thee; may they be propitious for thy attainment of superior intelligence' (i. 5, 6). 'The belly of Indra, which quaffs the Soma juice abundantly, swells like the ocean, and is ever moist, like the ample fluids of the palate' (i. 8, 7). 'Indra who tarries to regale himself in every place where Soma is offered' (i. 9, 10—Mahidatta translation). 'Voracious Indra has risen up as ardently as . . . . to partake of the copious libations, in the ladles; having stayed his well-horsed, golden, and splendid chariot, he plies himself, capable of heroic actions, with the beverage' (i. 56, 1, 15, 1). These must suffice here, for I shall continue this subject

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under the heading '*Wine* and Soma juice.' Indra's character is not very clear of other sins. Max Müller, in reference to one Rishi, says that 'he (the Rishi) wished to represent a squabble between Indra and the Maruts, such as they were familiar with in their own village life, and this was to be followed by a reconciliation. The boorish rudeness, selfishness and boastfulness here ascribed to Indra may seem offensive to those who cannot divest themselves of the modern meaning of deities, but, looked upon from the right point of view, it is really full of interest.' It proves that the highest standard of morality, even among the gods, was not very high.

This is also seen very clearly in regard to the wars in which they were engaged, which were mere wars of conquest. The Rakshasas, Asuras, etc., were killed simply because they were Rakshasas and Asuras (i. 12, 5). Indra is described (i. 130, 8) 'punishing the riteless; he subjected the black skin to the (Aryan) man. He burned all greedy enemies, as if he would burn them to ashes; he burned to ashes the devouring enemy' (vi. 62, 8–10).

Gambling seems to have been common in Vedic times. The actions of the gods are illustrated by means of terms used in gambling, though I am not aware that they themselves gambled. Still gambling was regarded as a fruitful source of evil. The gambler 'finds no comfort in his need; his dice give transient gifts, and ruin the winner: he is vexed to

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see his own wife, and the wives and happy homes of other men.'[1]

'Harmful sorcerers' and demons seem to have been very troublesome to these old Rishis. Deliverance from them is frequently prayed for (i. 35, 10; i. 36, 14). So also is deliverance from 'deceitful thieves' and robbers, 'wicked and covetous, waylaying and evil contemplating' (i. 42, 2, 3), and 'revilers of Soma juice' (i. 43, 8; 147, 5).

The tricks of trade were not unknown in those days. The god Rudra is entreated not to 'take advantage, like a trader, of his worshippers.' Selfishness and inhospitality were also known and hated. 'He who keeps his food to himself, has his sin to himself also.' 'The wise man makes the giving of gifts his breastplate.' 'The car of bounty rolls on easy wheels,' equals our modern phrase about 'greasing one's palm.'

As we shall see below, they, however, condemned neither polygamy nor polyandry, but speak approvingly of both.

Altogether, as M. Müller expresses it, the hymns 'represent human nature on a low level of selfishness and worldliness,' and 'ascribe to the gods sentiments and passions unworthy of the deity, such as anger, revenge, delight in material sacrifices,'[2] especially of the Soma juice.

[1] See Dr. Muir's *Metrical Translations*, p. 190, and R.-V., x. 34.
[2] Max Müller's *Chips*, vol. i. p. 37. Wilson, vol. iv. p. 133.

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The burden of humanity in Vedic times was sin. Its cry was, Deliver us from sin. And it was felt that the deliverer must be other than man; yea, divine and human. Yet one prays, 'Recommend us to Surya as sinless' (i. 123, 3). But more of this hereafter.

As intimately connected with the doctrine of sin, we pass on to the consideration of Immortality and the Future State of Man.

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VI.

IMMORTALITY AND THE FUTURE STATE OF MAN.

THE earliest references to immortality in the Rig-Veda are in connection with certain pert, clever artisans, called Ribhus, the three sons (Ribhu, Vibhu and Vaja) of Sudhanwan, a descendant of Angiras. The first verse of hymn 111[1] describes them thus: 'The Ribhus, possessed of skill in their work, constructed (for the Aswins) a well-built car. They framed the vigorous horses bearing Indra; they gave youthful existence to their parents; they gave to the calf its accompanying mother.' Their skill was specially manifested (and frequently referred to) in their making four cups for Indra out of one made for him by the god Tvashtri, the Aryan Vulcan. For this one act of skill they were rendered immortal and deified; according to one Rishi, to the great disgust of Tvashtri, who is represented as quite (i. 161, 4) ashamed of himself and hiding himself among the goddesses, and also of attempting to kill his rivals.

[1] i. 111, 1; 161, 7; iv. 33, 3; iv. 35, 5; iv. 36, 3; i. 161, 1, 5; iv. 33, 5, 6; iv. 35, 3; i. 31, 7; v. 4, 10; i. 191, 1–18; 125, 5, 6; v. 63, 2; viii. 58, 7. See below, pp. 127, 211, 216.

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Another Rishi, on the contrary, says that Tvashtri applauded their design and admired the brilliant results of their skill. All are, however, agreed that they were mortals, made immortal and deified because of this exhibition of skill. In addition to this special case, there are other undoubted references to immortality as the portion of the blessed, fully as clearly expressed as the older references in the Bible. Agni is said to render mortals immortal. He is called the guardian of immortality. The same powers are also ascribed to Soma. Immortality is promised as the reward of liberality, to the bestower of largesses. 'Rain, wealth, and immortality' are the blessings prayed for by one Rishi. Another Rishi is quite familiar with Indra on the subject: 'When we two, Indra and I, go to the region of the sun, to our home, may we, drinking nectar, seek thrice seven, in the realm of the friend.'

In the above references, and more so in the later hymns, immortality is represented as a gift that might be granted by the gods to the favoured few, a view not unfrequently given of our Christian doctrine in our own day. It is represented as that which the good and righteous might receive, while annihilation would be the portion of the wicked. One thing is very clear to every reader of the Veda, that the desires of the hymnists were ever towards cows, horses, offspring (sons), long life on earth, victory over their earthly enemies, etc.; that the requests for spiritual

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blessings, or an inheritance in heaven, or immortality, were very few in number, and not very clearly expressed. The visible and the sensible, as far as their hopes and wishes were concerned, occupied their thoughts, almost to the complete exclusion of the invisible and the spiritual.

It is also worthy of notice that the modern rite of *Shraddha*, on the proper performance of which by a son the happiness of the parent in the future is supposed to depend, is never once alluded to in the Veda, as an explanation of the desire for children, or indeed in any connection. So that we may conclude it had not originated then.

There are, however, distinct references to the future life of individuals, in the ninth and tenth books of the Rig, as well as in the more recent Atharva-Veda, a life of sensual rather than of spiritual joys, and more Mahomedan than Christian. In these references the connection is generally with the worship of the Pitris or Fathers. As for example: 'May the lords of truth be propitious to us, and so may the horses and kine; may the skilful Ribhus, dexterous of hand, may the Fathers (Pitris) be propitious to us in our invocations.' 'Let not the gods injure us here, nor our early Fathers, who know the realms.'[1]

I shall now quote from the more recent ninth and tenth Books, which contain clearer views of the future life, and in which also we find more distinct mytho-

[1] vii. 35, 12; iii. 55, 2.

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logy than in the first eight books. As those references have a most intimate connection with Yama, I shall give some details of his life and birth. The god Tvashtri, the skilful Vulcan of the Vedic religion, had a daughter named Saranyu, whom he had espoused to Vivasvat, 'the bright one,' identified with the sun. 'The whole world assembles to the marriage.' Soon after, she gave birth to twins, Yama and Yami. The immortal mother then creates another female exactly like herself, entrusts the twins to her, and puts her in her own place as Vivasvat's wife. She, thereafter, assumed the form of a mare, and disappeared. Vivasvat, before realizing the deception played upon him, had a son, Manu, by the newly created female. Discovering, somehow, that he had been deceived, and how, he assumed the form of a horse and went in pursuit of his lost wife. In time he overtook her. As a mare she gave birth to other twins, known as the two Kumaras, who are lauded as Aswins (sprung from a horse). This story is briefly stated in the 17th hymn of the 10th Book:—'Tvashtri makes a marriage for his daughter. Hearing so, this whole world assembles. The mother of Yama becoming wedded, the wife of the great Vivasvat disappeared. *They concealed the immortal bride from mortals.* Making another of similar form, she gave her to Vivasvat. And she bore the Aswins, when that happened. Saranyu abandoned the two pairs of twins.'

In the same book occurs another hymn in the form

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of a dialogue between Yama and his twin sister Yami, in which the latter tries to persuade the former, unsuccessfully, to cohabit with her. The reason she gives is that 'the immortals desire this; they desire a descendant left behind *by* (*Yama*) *the one sole mortal.*' This Yama is represented as the King of Hades, god of the dead, and the first of men that died, and sometimes as death itself. With him the spirits of the departed are said to dwell. The 14th hymn of the same tenth book calls upon men to 'Worship with an oblation to King Yama, son of Vivasvat, the assembler of men, who departed to the mighty streams,[1] and spied out the road for many. Yama was the first who found for us the way. This home is not to be taken from us. Those who are now born follow by their own paths to the place whither our ancient fathers have departed. . . . . Place thyself, Yama, on this sacrificial seat in concert with the Angirases[2] and Pitris (departed Fathers). Let the texts recited by the sages bring thee hither. Delight thyself, O king, with this oblation. Come with the adorable Angirases; delight thyself here, Yama, with the children of Virupa. Seated on the grass at this sacrifice, I invoke Vivasvat, who is thy father. May we enjoy the goodwill and gracious benevolence of those adorable beings the Angirases, our ancestors. . . .

[1] x. 10, 1–14. Muir's *Texts*, vol. v. pp. 284–313; 2d ed. Langlois, vol. iv. p. 144.

[2] These are represented as the descendants of Angiras, the father of Agni. They are also represented as a class of Pitris or *manes*.

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Depart thou, depart by the ancient paths to the place whither our early fathers have departed. There shalt thou see the two kings, Yama and the god Varuna, exhilarated by the oblation, meet with the Pitris, meet with Yama, obtain the fulfilment of thy desires in the highest heaven. Throwing off again all imperfection, go to thy home. Become united to a body, and clothed in a shining form. Go ye, depart ye, hasten ye from hence.[1] The Pitris have made for him this place. Yama gives him an abode distinguished by day, and waters, and lights. By an auspicious path do thou hasten past the two four-eyed brindled dogs [of Yama which guard the road to his abode, and which the departed are advised to hurry past with all possible speed. They were the offspring of Sarama, the dog of Indra]. Then approach the bountiful Pitris, who dwell in festivity with Yama. Entrust him, O Yama, to thy two four-eyed, road-guarding, man-observing watch-dogs; and bestow on him prosperity and health. The two brown messengers (the dogs) of Yama, broad of nostril and insatiable, wander about among men. May they give us again the auspicious breath of life, that we may behold the sun. Pour out the soma to Yama, offer him an oblation. To Yama the sacrifice proceeds, when heralded by Agni and prepared. Offer to Yama an oblation with butter, and be active. May he grant us to live a long life among the gods. Offer a most honied obla-

[1] M. Müller thinks these words are addressed to evil spirits.

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tion to King Yama, Let this salutation be offered to the earliest-born, the ancient Rishis, who made for us a path.'

The subjects of Yama seem to be divided into classes or ranks; for we read[1]: 'Let the lower, the upper, and the middle Pitris, the offerers of Soma, arise. May these Pitris, innocuous, and versed in righteousness, who have attained to higher life, protect us in the sacrifices. Let this reverence be to-day paid to the Pitris, who departed first, and who departed last, who are situated in the terrestrial sphere, or who are now among the powerful races (the gods). . . . Invited to these favourite oblations placed on the grass, may the Pitris, the offerers of Soma, come, may they hear us, may they intercede for us, and preserve us. . . . . Do us no injury, O Pitris, on account of any offence which we, after the manner of men, may commit against you. . . . Bestow wealth on the mortal who worships you. May Yama feast according to his desire on the oblations, eager, and sharing his gratification with the eager Vasishthas, our ancient ancestors, who presented a Soma libation. Come, Agni, with a thousand of those exalted ancient Pitris, adorers of the gods, sitters at the fire, who are true, who are eaters and drinkers of oblations, and who are received into the same chariot with Indra and the gods. Come hither, ye Agnishvatta Pitris, occupy each a seat, ye wise directors; eat the obla-

[1] Rig-Veda, x. 15.

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tions which have been arranged on the grass, and then bestow wealth on us, with all our offspring. . . . Do thou, O self-resplendent god, along with those Pitris, who, whether they have undergone cremation or not, are gladdened by our oblation, grant us this higher vitality, and a body according to our desire.'[1] From this remarkable hymn we see that the inhabitants of heaven were engaged chiefly in eating and drinking, at least no other employment of any definite kind is ascribed to them. Observe also the reference to a resurrection body.

Agni's treatment of the body is somewhat mysterious. He consumes it, but destroys nothing of it. The members are separated, but not decomposed into their elements. They all go to heaven, to be reunited there, but they go by different routes. 'Do thou, Agni, burn up or consume him (the deceased); do not dissolve his skin, or his body. When thou hast matured him, O Yatavedas (Agni), then send him to the Pitris. When thou maturest him, Yatavedas, then consign him to the Pitris. When he shall reach that state of vitality, he shall then fulfil the pleasure of the gods. Let his eye go to the sun, his breath to the wind. Go to the sky, and to the earth, according to the nature of thy several parts; or go to the waters, if that is suitable for thee; enter into the plants with thy members. As for his unborn part,

[1] Dr. Muir's *Oriental Studies*, p. 181 (Article on the Vedic Doctrine of a Future Life).

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do thou (Agni) kindle it with thy heat; let thy flame and thy lustre kindle it; with those forms of thine which are auspicious, convey it to the world of the righteous. Give up again, Agni, to the Pitris him who comes offered to thee, with oblations. Putting on life, let him approach his remains; let him meet with his body, O Yatavedas.'[1]

Here then are hints of a *Resurrection* of a *spiritual body*, a body purified as by fire; or rather, fire itself is the body of the soul. What else can be the meaning of the statement that the garment of the spirit was to be fire, 'the bright armour of Agni'? In one verse it is said that the dead is rewarded for his good deeds, that he leaves or casts off all evil, and, 'glorified, takes his body.' The same Rishi prayed (x. 14, 11) that the departed dead might be protected from the terrible dogs of Yama, the king of the dead. He must have believed that the departed had bodies to be bit. In the later epics, the great sages are represented as casting off their old bodies and ascending in new ones of a splendour like the sun and in chariots of fire. There are hymns in the Veda that ask the fire 'not to burn nor tear the body,' and the fathers 'to rejoice in heaven with all their limbs.'[2]

[1] R.-V., x. 16; x. 97, 16; i. 38, 5; ix. 113, 7; x. 14, 8-10; 15, 14; x. 16, 15; ix. 113, 9-11; x. 14, 14; ix. 113, 8-11. See below, p. 250, and above, p. 52.

[2] R.-V., x. 14, 8, 11; 16, 4; 121, 13; ii. 29, 6; x. 14, 11. *Chips*, p. 47. Johnson's *Oriental Religions*, p. 130. Bournouf's *La Veda*, p. 186.

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'The belief in the immortality of the soul,' says Bournouf, 'not naked and inactive, but living and clothed with a glorious body, was never interrupted for a moment: it is now in India what it was in those ancient times, and even rests on a similar metaphysical basis.'

Yama, though so thoroughly associated in the Rig-Veda with the happiness of the dead, and in modern Hinduism with the misery of the wicked, is never in the Rig connected with penal retribution. In fact, there is very little mention of hell at all in the Veda. Still, Yama and his messenger, death, and his dogs were naturally enough objects of fear in Vedic times. Deliverance is prayed for from the bonds of Yama. Another prayer runs: 'Let not thy worshipper go along the road of Yama,' even though it be to the realms of eternal light, 'where a delectable abode is provided,' and a perfect life, crowded with the fulfilment of all desires, and passed in the presence of the gods 'in the third heaven, in the third sky, where action is unrestrained, where are pleasures and enjoyments—in the sphere of the sun—where ambrosia and satisfaction are found; where there are joys and delights and pleasures and gratifications; where the objects of desire are attained.' These gratifications and desires are understood to be sensual, such at least is the character of those described in the Atharva-Veda, and we have no reason to believe that anything different was understood by the Rishis of

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the Rig. 'In the celestial sphere they have abundance of sexual gratification.'[1] The offerer of a black-footed sheep 'ascends to the sky where no tribute is paid by the weak to the stronger.' The gods themselves knew no other pleasures than the carnal and material. Soma, honey, ambrosia, and suchlike, constituted their choice food. Yama is described as carousing with them under a leafy tree, and the Pitris as indulging in festivity or revelling with Yama. Indra is described as handsome himself, and as having a handsome wife and pleasure in his house. (See Muir's *Metrical Trans.*, p. 186, and *Oriental Studies*, p. 98, note.)

We have already stated that the virtue, above all others, that is represented as gaining immortality to its possessor, is liberality. Other virtues are represented elsewhere as equally, if not more, efficacious. 'Let the deceased depart to those for whom the hoped beverage flows; let him depart to those who through vigorous abstraction (*tapas*) are invincible, who, through *tapas*, have gone to heaven, to those who have performed great *tapas*. Let him depart to the combatants in battles, to the heroes who have sacrificed their lives, or to those who have bestowed thousands of largesses. Let him depart, Yama, to those austere ancient Pitris, who have practised and promoted sacred rites. Let him depart, Yama, to those austere Rishis, born of rigorous abstraction, to those sages

[1] A.-V., iv. 34, 2; iii. 29, 3; x. 135, 1; x. 14, 10; iii. 53, 6.

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skilled in a thousand sciences who guard the sun.'[1] 'The man who satisfies others by his liberality, abides settled on the summit of the sky; he goes to the gods; to him the flowing waters carry butter; his cow overflows for him continually. Those wonderful things belong to those who give gifts; for them there are suns in the sky. Those who give gifts attain immortality; they prolong their lives.' 'Those who bestow gifts mount aloft in the sky. The givers of horses abide with the sun. The givers of gold obtain immortality. Those who bestow raiment, O Soma, prolong their lives. . . . Liberal men do not die, nor suffer destruction. The liberal are not injured or distressed. Liberality confers on them everything, both this entire world and heaven.'

The Vedic doctrine of the Pitris bears a close family likeness, not only to the Greek[2] and Roman doctrine concerning the manes, but also to what is a child of the same Aryan family, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Saints who, like the Pitris, are represented as hearing the prayers of their votaries, interceding in their behalf, protecting them from their enemies, and bestowing wealth or luck on their favourites.

There remains that I should produce the texts concerning the retribution of the wicked. They are not many in number, nor very clear or definite as

[1] x. 154, 2-5; i. 125, 5, 6; x. 107, 2, 8; x. 117. Muir's *Met. Trans.*, p. 192.

[2] iv. 5, 5; vii. 104, 3; ix. 73, 8.

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to their signification. Dr. Muir quotes only three. 'This deep abyss (*pada*) has been produced for those who, being wicked, false, untrue, go about like women without brothers, like females hostile to their husbands.' 'Indra and Soma, dash those malicious Rakshasas into the abyss (*vaure*), into bottomless darkness, so that not even one of them may get out.' 'Knowing, Soma beholds all worlds; he hurls the hated and the irreligious into the abyss (*karte*).'[1] Another text, 'The druhs, "powers of evil," follow the sins of men, binding as with cords,' seems to refer to the future punishment of the wicked. The Kelts of Scotland have the same word 'druh,' meaning ghost, evil spirit, or magician. Wilson's translation of vi. 62, 3, is suggestive in the same connection. It is a prayer to the Aswins: 'Let the injurers of the liberal man (be consigned) by you to (final) repose.'

In connection with this subject of a future life, we would notice a remarkable verse in the 9th Book that reminds us of the words of our Lord. Death, Yama's kindly messenger, is represented as 'bringing them to the homes he had gone before to prepare for them, and which could not be taken from them.' One of those which Dr. Muir calls the *Rig-Veda Burial Hymns*, contains the prayer: 'There, make me immortal, where action is free, and all desires are fulfilled.' Elsewhere the fire gods are asked to

[1] R.-V., ix. 113, 7. Muir's *Sans. Texts*, vol. v. p. 312.

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'warm by their heat his immortal part,' a prayer suggestive of a colder climate than that of India.

The *Brahmana* portions of the Veda express a more decided belief in a future life, than the mantras or hymns, as a state of rewards and punishments. Monier Williams quotes the following (x. 4, 3, 9):—

'The gods lived constantly in dread of Death,
The mighty Ender; so with toilsome rites
They worshipped and performed religious acts
Till they became immortal. Then the Ender
Said to the gods, As ye have made yourselves
Imperishable, so will men endeavour
To free themselves from me; what portion, then,
Shall I possess in man? The gods replied,
"Henceforth no being shall become immortal
In his own body; this his mortal frame
Shalt thou still seize; this shall remain thy own.
He who through knowledge or religious works
Henceforth attains to immortality
Shall first present his body, Death, to thee."'

Mitra and Varuna are addressed, 'Beloved Kings of Immortality' (i. 122, 11); while the goddess Uṣhas (the Dawn) is represented as 'The first of all creation, the winner of spoil, the young damsel, born every day.'

Katyayana says that sacrifice procures heaven, and in a hymn addressed to *Soma* we have a description of heaven:

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'Where there is eternal light, in the world where the sun is placed, in that immortal imperishable world place me, O Soma.

'Where King Vaivasvata (Yama) reigns, where the secret place of heaven is, where the mighty waters are, there make me immortal.

'Where life is free, in the third heaven of heavens, where the worlds are radiant, there make me immortal.

'Where wishes and desires are, where the place of the bright sun is, where there is freedom and delight, there make me immortal.

'Where there is happiness and delight, where joy and pleasure reside, where the desires of our desires are attained, there make me immortal.'[1]

This prayer to Soma, as the giver of immortality, suggests the discussion of *Wine*, *Drinking*, and the peculiar doctrine of *Soma*, constituting, as it does, one of the most unique, curious, and characteristic features of the Vedic religion.

[1] M. Müller's *Chips*, vol. i. p. 46.

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VII.

(*WINE, SOMA, AND DRINKING.*)

THAT intoxicating drinks were in common use in Vedic times cannot be questioned. In Hymn i. 191, 10,[1] we read the words: 'I deposit the poison in the solar orb like a leather bottle in the house of a vendor of spirits;' which clearly proves that wine was kept in leathern bottles and sold in the bazaar. Indra is very familiarly addressed: 'Thou, Indra, never findest a rich man to be thy friend; wine-swillers despise thee.'[2] Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra is very decided upon the fact, that 'the earliest Brahman settlers were a spirit-drinking race, and indulged largely in soma beer and strong spirits,' in the sense of intoxicating drinks. 'The Sautramani and Vajapaya rites, of which libations of strong arrack formed a prominent feature, were held in the highest esteem.' 'None will venture to deny that the *sura* of the Sautramani and Vajapaya was other

[1] Wilson's Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 204.

[2] R.-V., viii. 21, 14. See Zend Avesta, ii. 4, 50 ff. Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 167, 287. Wilson's R.-V., vol. ii. p. xxiv. Vol. i. pp. 21, 118, 149, 232, 240, 263, 278, 327.

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than arrack manufactured from rice-meal; and that will suffice to show that the Vedic Hindus did countenance the use of spirits. . . . In the hot plains of India, over-indulgence in spirituous drinks, however, gradually bore its evil consequences, and among the thoughtful a revulsion of feeling was the result. The later Vedas accordingly proposed a compromise, and, leaving the rites intact, prohibited the use of spirits for the gratification of the senses . . . saying, "Wine is unfit to be drunk, unfit to be given, and unfit to be accepted," and denounced drinking to be heinous in the last degree, quite as bad as the murder of a Brahmin.'[1]

The incidents which are said to have led to this prohibition are curious, if not instructive.

Sukra, the chief priest and preceptor of the Asuras, had a Devata pupil named Kacha, who was specially anxious to worm out of his master the charm of reviving dead men. The Asuras, fearing that the pupil might succeed and impart the secret to their enemies the Devatas, assassinated him, and mixed his ashes with Sukra's wine. Kacha had, previous to this, secured the affections of his teacher's daughter. The lady, ignorant of the whereabouts of her lover's remains, but believing that he was dead, insisted on the father restoring him to life by means of his great secret. The charm was repeated, and the teacher was not a little astonished to find that

[1] *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, 1873, p. 2.

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the pupil was restored to life within his own capacious stomach.

The teacher, with the view of extricating himself from his great difficulty, taught the charm to the imprisoned pupil, and then allowed himself to be ripped open. The first act of the liberated pupil was to repeat the charm for the restoration of the slaughtered master; and the first act of the restored master, justly divining the prime cause of all this mischief, was to prohibit the use of wine to Brahmins. 'From this day forward,' said he, 'the Brahmin who, through infatuation, will drink arrack (*sura*) shall lose all his religious merit; that wretch will be guilty of the sin of killing Brahmins, and be condemned in this as well as in a future world. Let all pious Brahmins, mindful of their duty to their tutors, as also to the Devas (gods) and mankind in general, attend to this rule of conduct for Brahmins, ordained by me for all the religious of the universe.'

Krishna cursed the wine-bibber, because his own kith and kin, the Yadavas, were great drunkards, a reason that is as justly applicable now as it was of old. The punishment ordered by Manu for any Brahmin tasting wine is severe enough for the most rigid teetotaler. It is nothing less than branding the publican's flag or ensign, the bottle, on the Brahmin's forehead, with the further penalty of 'none to eat with him, none to read with him, none

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allied in marriage to him, abject and excluded from all social duties, let him wander over the earth. Branded with an indelible mark, he shall be deserted by his paternal and maternal relations, treated by none with affection, received by none with respect. Such is the ordinance of Manu.'

In the Ramayana, Visvamitra, the reputed author of a considerable number of the hymns of the Rig-Veda, is said to have been entertained with *maireya* and *sura* by his host, Vasishtha. In the same great poem Sita, Rama's queen, is represented as worshipping the Ganges in these words: 'Be merciful to us, O goddess, and I shall, on my return home, worship thee with a thousand jars of arrack and dishes of cooked flesh-meat.' To the river Yamuna she was equally liberal. 'Be thou auspicious, O goddess; I am crossing thee. When my husband has accomplished his vow, I shall worship thee with a thousand head of cattle and a hundred jars of arrack.'[1] In the Markandeya Purana,[1] the reading of which constitutes an essential part of the worship of Durga during the great annual holidays, the goddess is represented as particularly addicted to strong drinks. She is served with overflowing goblets, and 'she drinks the best wines again and again, and, with reddened eyes, she now and then puts on a sweet smile, which greatly enhances her beauty.' Addressing the Asura, she

[1] *Hindoo Patriot*, 20th October 1879.

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said, 'Stay thou, impudent demon, wait till I finish my drink,'—rendered by Dr. Mitra, 'Roar, roar, thou fool, for a moment only, till I finish my drinking.' The same Purana gives another picture of the same goddess to match the above: 'Thus arrayed, the mighty goddess was worshipped by the whole hosts of the gods; and she sent forth a tremendous laughter, that resounded in the heavens. By this awe-inspiring sound the seven worlds shook with fear; it went on vibrating in space, and by its undulating motion were produced formidable foamy waves on the "vasty deep."'

The *Sakta Tantras* insist upon the use of wine as an element of devotion, and the Kaulas, their most ardent followers, have most disgraceful orgies in connection with its religious use. Sukra's curse has, however, to be removed before the liquor can be drunk.

In modern times various kinds of intoxicating substances have been used, alike in India and in other countries. The drink so often spoken of in the Vedic times as Soma, or Soma juice, is now admitted, we believe, by the best Sanskrit scholars to have been intoxicating. The numerous references to it in the Rig-Veda Sanhita are consistent only with such an interpretation. The authors of the hymns are loud in its praise. Many of their hymns were set apart for repetition at the various stages of its manufacture. It was made from the juice of a creeper called the *moon* plant (*Asclepias acida* or

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Sarcostema viminalis), diluted with water, mixed with barley-meal, clarified butter, and the meal of wild paddy (*nivara*), and fermented in a jar for nine days. The starchy substance of the meal supplied the material for the vinous fermentation, and the Soma juice the part of hops in beer. Its effects on gods and men were those of alcohol. We quote a few verses from the Rig-Veda Sanhita:—

'The sacred hymnist, desiring your presence, offers to you both, Indra and Agni, for your exhilaration, the Soma libation. Beholders of all things, seated at this sacrifice upon the sacred grass, be exhilarated by drinking of the effused libation.'[1]

'It, Soma, (generates) the great light of day common to all mankind.'[2] 'Indra and Vishnu, drinkers of the fermented Soma, ... drink of this sweet Soma; fill with it your stomachs; may the inebriating beverage reach you' (vi. 69, 6, 7; vi. 72).

Its effects on Indra and his partiality for it are dwelt upon in many of the earliest hymns. He is said to have drunk at one draught 30 bowls of Soma. Thus exhilarated, 'he hurries off escorted by troops of Maruts, and is sometimes attended by his faithful comrade Vishnu, to encounter the hostile powers in the atmosphere.' 'Drink this Soma, O Indra, being expressed by means of the stones, even as a bull drinks from a trough filled by means of a bucket — even as a most thirsty bull. For thy

[1] i. 7; i. 27, 4, 5. [2] ix. 61.

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delightful exhilaration, for thee to drink this most powerful Soma, may (thy horses) carry thee hither even as the tawny horses bring the sun—even as (the tawny horses bring) the sun daily.' 'O Soma, give unto us the mastery of a hundred men, great wealth combined with great power. May the revilers of Soma never (hurt) us, may enemies never hurt. Give us, O Soma, a share in thy strength. Those, O immortal Soma, who (become) thy subjects in the highest house of sacrifice, love (them as their) king, listen to them as they worship thee at the altar.'[1]

Just as men are represented as dependent on the gods, so the gods are represented as equally dependent on men for their support and nourishment, if not for their very existence. Hence Dr. Haug says: 'Men must present offerings to the gods to increase the power and strength of their divine protectors. They must, for instance, inebriate Indra with Soma, that he might gather strength for conquering the demons.'[2] The same writer says that the Soma ceremony is the holiest rite in the whole Brahminical service, just as the Haoma ceremony of the Parsi priests is regarded by them as the most sacred performance. We need not wonder, therefore, that like the sacrifice and the mantra, it also was deified, and worship offered to it. All the hymns in the ninth Book of the Rig-Veda,

[1] i. 130; i. 43, 7-9 (Mahratta translation).

[2] Haug's *Ait. Brah.*, ii. 4. See Dr. Wilson's *Caste*, vol. ii. p. 2; R.-V., ix. 113, 7.

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114 in all, are dedicated to it. Professor Whitney says: 'The simple-minded Aryan people had no sooner perceived that this liquid had power to elevate the spirits, and produce a temporary frenzy, under the influence of which the individual was prompted to, and capable of, deeds beyond his natural powers, than they found in it something divine; it was, to their apprehension, a god, endowing those into whom it entered with god-like powers; the plant which afforded it became the king of plants; the process of preparing it was a holy sacrifice; the instruments used, therefore, were sacred. The high antiquity of this *cultus* is attested by the references to it found occurring in the Persian *Avesta*.'[1] Hence we find Soma addressed as a divinity in such words as these: 'Where there is eternal light, in the world where the sun is placed, in that immortal, imperishable world, place me, O Soma.'[2]

'This Soma is a god; he cures
The sharpest ills that man endures.
He heals the sick, the sad he cheers,
He nerves the weak, dispels their fears,

[1] In Bleeck's Avesta, vol. ii., will be found the praises of Haoma, professedly in the form of a conversation between Zarathusthra and 'Haoma, the pure, who is far from death.' The conversation extends over three chapters of Yacna. Haoma is described as 'the mightiest, strongest, most active, swiftest, the most victorious amongst the heavenly beings.' The third chapter ends with Zarathusthra's prayer: 'Send thou me also, O Haoma, pure, the far from death, to the best place of the pure, to the brilliant, adorned with all brightness.'

[2] See viii. 48, 3. Muir's *Studies*, p. 41. *Texts*, v. p. 262.

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The faint with martial ardour fires,
With lofty thoughts the bard inspires.
The soul from earth to heaven he lifts;
So great and wondrous are his gifts.
Men feel the god within their veins,
And cry in loud, exulting strains:
"We've quaffed the Soma bright,
And are immortal grown;
We've entered into light,
And all the gods have known.
What mortal now can harm,
Or foeman vex us more?
Through thee, beyond alarm,
Immortal god, we soar."'—MUIR.

Soma is described as the soul of sacrifice, the king of gods and men, the lord of creatures, the generator of the sky and earth, of Agni, Surja, Indra, and Vishnu. Himself immortal, he confers immortality on gods and men; thousand-eyed, he beholds all worlds and destroys the irreligious. His praises remind us forcibly of those of whisky and John Barleycorn by the Burnses of modern times, and of the orgies of the middle ages in connection with the collecting of the mistletoe and the burning of the yule-tree, as well as of those of Bacchus or Dionysus in more ancient times.

Some, however, are disposed to look more charitably upon the Soma sacrifices. Canon Rawlinson writes in the *Sunday at Home* thus: 'No doubt the

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origin of the Soma ceremony must be referred to the exhilarating properties of the fermented juice, and to the delight and astonishment which the discovery of them excited in simple minds. But exhilaration is a very different thing from drunkenness; and, though Orientals do not often draw the distinction, we are scarcely justified in concluding, without better evidence than any which has been adduced as yet, that the Soma ceremony of the Hindus was in the early ages a mere Bacchanalian orgy, in which the worshippers intoxicated themselves in honour of approving deities. Exhilaration will sufficiently explain all that is said of the Soma in the Rig-Veda; and it is charitable to suppose that nothing more was aimed at in the Soma ceremony.'

In Siva's vows to Gunga we find wine and cooked flesh-meats associated. From the want of a better place, we also may here connect the two together by remarking that it is very clear the Vedic Hindus were eaters of 'bull, ram, and buffalo,' as a Bengali classifies them. They were beef-eaters. In Rig-Veda i. 29, 19, Indra is asked to sever the joints of the enemy 'as butchers (or carvers) cut up a cow.' On this verse H. H. Wilson remarks: 'This text at any rate proves that no horror was attached to the notion of a joint of beef in ancient days among the Hindus.'[1] There are other texts, such as, 'O Indra,

[1] Wilson's Rig-Veda Sanhita, vol. i. p. 165; see also vol. iii. pp. 163, 276, 416, 453; vol. iv. p. 26. R.-V., vi. 75, 11.

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bestow upon him who glorifies thee divine food, the chiefest of which is cattle.' 'I saw at a distance smoke coming from burning cow-dung. Yonder, by means of this nether lying and spreading (Agni) the heroes cooked a variegated bull. Those were the first acts of religion.' 'One of them drives the lame cow to the water; another divides into its parts the flesh cut out with the knife; the third removes before evening the intestines containing the undigested grass. What, after this, should parents receive from their sons?' 'The arrow is bound with the sinews of the cow.' 'Where the pious have recourse to Indra for food, he finds it in the haunts of the *gaura* and *gavaya*,' two well-known Indian species of the cow. In hymn i. 32, Indra is represented as slaying 'the eldest of serpents,' 'the enemy more hostile than other enemies,' Vritra by name, and standing 'over him thus lying low like a slaughtered bull.' Then 'Vritra's mother intervened with all her power. Indra struck her with his thunderbolt. The mother lay on the son, the son underneath the mother. The demoness lay dead like a cow with her calf.'[1] Such language presupposes acquaintance with the slaughtering of cows, bulls, and calves, incompatible with the modern Hindu doctrine concerning this subject.

From *Soma, wine, and cows*, we pass on to the subject of *Sacrifice* generally.

[1] The Maharati Vedarthayatna, i. 32, 8, 9; i. 164, 43; i. 161, 10.

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VIII.

SACRIFICE.

THE most prominent feature of the Vedic religion is its sacrifices. Scarcely a hymn is found in which sacrifice is not alluded to. The very first verse of the very first hymn runs[1]: 'I glorify Agni, the high priest (*purohit*) of the sacrifice, the divine ministrant who presents the oblation (to the gods), and is the possessor of great wealth.' The expression translated by Professor Wilson, 'high priest of the sacrifice,' is rendered by Dr. Banerjea, *the foremost minister of the sacrifice.* Here Agni is so called. In the first of the hymns to the Maruts, with which Max Müller commences his translation of the Rig-Veda Sanhita,[2] we find a similar reference. The eighth verse reads: 'With the beloved hosts of Indra, with the blameless heaven-tending (Maruts), the sacrificer cries aloud.' The separate history of the Aryan family, whether Hindu, Iranian, Teutonic, or Keltic, can go no further back than these hymns. In

[1] H. H. Wilson's Rig-Veda, vol. i. p. 2. *Indian Evangelical Review*, vol. vii. pp. 497, 500.

[2] Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 294-97, 5.

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them sacrifices are spoken of as if they were coeval with man. They occupy the foremost place in importance, and apparently in age, in the Indo-Aryan worship.

There are numerous passages, in this most ancient of hymn-books, most conclusively proving that the ancient Aryans regarded sacrifice as the most sacred act in their worship. It and its symbol of success, fire, were regarded as the 'navel of the world.'[1] The two most prominent deities in the hymns are Agni and Indra. And the importance of both is most intimately associated with the sacrifice. The first, as we have seen, is its chief ministrant; the second, its most regular attendant. The sacrifice undoubtedly existed before there were priests set apart for its celebration, when the householder was high priest in his own family. The following texts, among many, indicate in a very simple way the importance in which it was held:[2]—

'To the regular performers of sacrifices, the breezes are sweet, and the rivers distil sweetness.

'Give us, O Indra, multitudes of good horses, with which we may offer our oblations, by the repetition of the proper sentences, by the prospering of which we may escape all sins. Do thou now accept our service with much regard.

'Do thou lead us safe through all sins by the way of sacrifice.'

[1] R.-V., i. 59, 12; 164, 35.
[2] R.-V., i. 90, 6; x. 113, 10; i. 173, 2.

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This and other passages connect the sacrifice with the idea of a boat saving from a flood. We also find that the institution of the sacrifice in some texts is connected with Manu, the man who survived the flood, as for example, such texts as these:—

'O Agni, adored by us, bring the gods in a most pleasant chariot. Thou art the invoker appointed by Manu.' 'O Agni, thou art the accomplisher of the burnt-offering, appointed by Manu.'[1] 'O illustrious Varuna, do thou quicken our understanding—we that are practising this ceremony—that we may embark on the good ferrying boat by which we may escape all sins;'[2] reminding us, as Dr. Banerjea records, not only of Noah's ark, but also of the words in the Baptismal Service of the Church of England,—that he 'may be received into the ark of Christ's Church, and may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that he may finally come to the land of everlasting life.'

The formula given in the most important of the Brahmanas of the Sama-Veda, throws much light on the view taken of the sacrifice in the Vedic times. It runs:

'(O thou, animal limb, now being consigned to the fire!) thou art the annulment of sins committed by gods. Thou art the annulment of sins committed by the (departed) fathers. Thou art the annulment of

[1] R.-V., i. 13, 4; 14, 11.
[2] R.-V., viii. 42, 3; vii. 65, 3. Wilson, vol. iv. p. 141.

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sins committed by men. Thou art the annulment of sins committed by ourselves. Whatever sins we have committed by day or by night, thou art the annulment thereof. Whatever sins we have committed, sleeping or waking, thou art the annulment thereof. Whatever sins we have committed, knowing or unknowing, thou art the annulment thereof. Thou art the annulment of sin—of sin.'[1] In this extraordinary passage it will be observed that the sacrifice was regarded in one word, and that a Biblical one, as 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' And though 'it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin,' it may be the type or shadow of the blood of the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' which was appointed by God for this express purpose. When we consider such texts, we may well conclude, even independent of revelation, that from the beginning men regarded sacrifice as an act of worship of the highest importance. The hymns of the Rig-Veda are crowded with references to sacrifices of one or other of the following kinds:[2]—

1) Burnt-offerings and libations of Soma, butter and wine.
(2) Half-monthly sacrifices at new and full moon.
(3) Sacrifices every four months.

[1] *Tandya Maha-Brahmana*, p. 55. Dr. Banerjea's *Aryan Witness*, p. 210.

[2] Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*, vol. i. p. 324; *Indian Wisdom*, p. 3. Wilson, vol. iv. p. 63. R.-V., vi. 19, 4.

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(4) Sacrifices of various lower animals.

(5) Sacrifice of human beings; and lastly,

(6) The sacrifice of the Lord of Creation.

Of these the most commonly referred to in the Rig-Veda are offerings of (1) the Soma plant, so intimately associated in the mind of the Aryan with life; of (2) clarified butter, the choicest gift of his herds and of his simple art. These two corresponded with the Jewish offerings of corn and wine. Then there was also (3) the fire, as the purest of elements and the purifier of the metals, the light and life of nature and of man. Whether these were chosen because some divineness was seen in them, or whether they came to be regarded as divine from their use in the sacrifice, it is difficult to say. One thing we know, that the sacrifice in itself, and also the *ghi* (or clarified butter), Soma, and fire, were regarded as divine and worshipped as gods.[1]

There is something mysterious in the regard paid to the Soma juice by our Aryan brethren of ancient times. But we have discussed the Soma sacrifice at such length above, that we cannot devote more space to it here.

We have not much to say in regard to animal sacrifices—save that of the horse and the human, to the consideration of which we will now proceed. That, during the Vedic period, lower animals, specially the cow, the goat, and the horse, were offered to the gods

[1] R.-V., i. 91; vi. 47; 16, 42. Johnson's *Oriental Religions*, p. 138.

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or Devas and eaten by men, is very clear. The sacrifice of both horse and goat is referred to in what are called 'the horse hymns.'[1]

'When the priests at the season (of this ceremony) lead forth the horse, the offering devoted to the gods, thrice round the (sacrificial fire); then the goat, the portion of Pushan (or Agni), goes first, announcing the sacrifice to the gods.' That is, the goat is first sacrificed and then the horse.

'May my desire be of itself accomplished such as it has been entertained, that the smooth-backed steed should come to (gratify) the expectations of the gods; we have made him well secure for the nutriment of the gods; let the wise saints now rejoice.'

Then the prayer is addressed to the horse, that the halter, the heel-ropes, the head-ropes, the girths, any other requisite, the grass that was put into his mouth, whatever the flies may have eaten of his raw flesh, whatever was smeared on the brush or axe, on the hands or nails of the immolator, the place of going forth, of tarrying, of rolling on the ground, the water that he had drunk, the grass that he had eaten, might all of them be with him among the gods. Then the roasting and the cooking of his flesh are described; and every bit of him, even to the smallest that may have fallen from the spit, is to 'be given to the longing gods.' Lastly, a prayer is offered that the exertions of the priests watching the cooking of the

[1] R.-V., i. 162, 41. Wilson, vol. ii. p. 113.

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horse, who say, 'It is fragrant, therefore give us some,' who solicit the flesh of the horse as alms, may be for the good of the composer.

There was mercy and a feeling of kindness to the noble brute manifested in the treatment received from his sacrificers. A horse or an ox suffers more from a day's hard labour in a cart, or a plough driven by a cruel master, than from the death inflicted by a merciful butcher. Indeed, the excellent kind-hearted officers of the societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals might consider the propriety of printing portions of the hymns, for distribution in our Indian slaughter-houses, bazaars, and kitchens.

'Whoever has goaded thee in thy paces, either with heel or with whip, whilst snorting in thy strength, all these vexations I pour out with holy prayer, as oblations with the ladle. The axe penetrates the thirty-four ribs of the swift horse; the beloved of the gods (the immolators) cut up the horse with skill, so that the limbs may be unperforated, and recapitulating joint by joint.

'Let not thy precious body grieve thee, who art going verily to the gods; let not the axe linger in thy body; let not the greedy and unskilful (immolator), missing the members, mangle thy limbs needlessly with his knife.

'Verily at this moment thou dost not die, nor art thou harmed, for thou goest by auspicious paths to the gods. The horses of Indra, the steeds of the

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Maruts, shall be yoked (to their cars), and a courser shall be placed in the shaft of the ass of the Aświns (to bear thee to heaven).'

Then follows *the prayer:*

'May this horse bring to us all sustaining wealth, with abundance of cows, of excellent horses, and of male offspring; may the spirited steed bring us exemption from wickedness; may this horse, offered in oblation, procure for us bodily vigour.'

The second hymn[1] I quote in full from Wilson's translation:—

'1. Thy great birth, O horse, is to be glorified; whether first springing from the firmament or from the water, inasmuch as thou hast neighed (auspiciously), for thou hast the wings of the falcon and the limbs of the deer.

'2. Trita harnessed the horse which was given by Yama; Indra first mounted him, and Gandharba seized his reins. Vasus, you fabricated the horse from the sun.

'3. Thou, horse, art Yama; thou art Aditya; thou art Trita by a mysterious act; thou art associated with Soma. The sages have said there are three bindings of thee in heaven.

'4. They have said that three are thy bindings in heaven; three upon earth; and three in the firmament. Thou declarest to me, horse, who art (one with) Varuna, that which they have called thy most excellent birth.

[1] Wilson, vol. ii. p. 121.

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'5. I have beheld, horse, these thy purifying (regions); these impressions of the feet of thee, who sharest in the sacrifice; and here thy auspicious reins, which are the protectors of the rite that preserve it.

'6. I recognise in my mind thy form afar off, going from (the earth) below, by way of heaven, to the sun. I behold thy head soaring aloft, and mounting quickly by unobstructed paths, unsullied by dust.

'7. I behold thy most excellent form coming eagerly to (receive) thy food in thy (holy) place of earth: when thy attendant brings thee nigh to the enjoyment (of the provender), therefore greedy, thou devourest the fodder.

'8. The car follows thee, O horse: men attend thee; cattle follow thee; the loveliness of maidens (waits) upon thee; troops of demigods following thee have sought thy friendship; the gods themselves have been admirers of thy vigour.

'9. His mane is of gold; his feet are of iron; and fleet as thought, Indra is his inferior (in speed). The gods have come to partake of his (being offered as) oblation: the first who mounted the horse was Indra.

'10. The full-haunched, slender-waisted, high-spirited, and celestial coursers (of the sun), gallop along like swans in rows, when the horses spread along the heavenly path.[1]

'11. Thy body, horse, is made for motion; thy

[1] As to the Aryan myths about the heavenly path, see *The Contemporary Review* for October 1879, vol. xxxvi. p. 259.

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mind is rapid (in intention) as the wind; the hairs (of thy mane) are tossed in manifold directions; and spread beautiful in the forests.

'12. The swift horse approaches the place of immolation, meditating with mind intent upon the gods; the goat bound to him is led before him; after him follow the priests and the singers.

'13. The horse proceeds to that assembly which is most excellent; to the presence of his father and his mother (heaven and earth). Go, (horse), to-day rejoicing to the gods, that (the sacrifice) may yield blessings to the donor.'[1]

This sacrifice of the horse was regarded as the chief of all animal sacrifices. In later times it came to be so exaggerated in importance, that a hundred horse sacrifices were supposed to entitle the sacrificer to displace Indra from his throne in heaven.

The words of the first of the hymns about the cooking and boiling of his flesh and the remains of it on the axe, etc., make it very clear that it was no make-believe sacrifice, but a real action, the slaughter of our noblest animal for the supposed temporal and spiritual benefit of the sacrificer.

Goats and buffaloes are still sacrificed to the goddess Kali, but there are no more horse sacrifices performed in India.

Of all sacrifices referred to, or supposed to be

[1] i. 163; Southey's *Curse of Kehama;* Wilson's Rig-Veda, vol. ii. pp. xii. xiii.

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referred to, in the Rig-Veda, that which has caused most discussion is the human sacrifice. The passages on which the discussion chiefly turns are few in number. I have not observed anywhere the words of vii. 19, 4 used in this discussion:—'Thou, (Indra), hast destroyed, along with the Maruts, numerous enemies at the sacrifice to the gods; thou hast put to sleep with the thunderbolt the Dasyas, Chumuri, and Dhuni, on behalf of Dabhiti.' Is there not here in this text an allusion to the sacrifice of the Aryans' enemies to their gods? But the most important hymn is, I suppose, the 90th hymn of the 10th Mandala, remarkable not only as containing what many suppose are references to a human or rather a divine sacrifice, but also attempts are made to find here the earliest references to Pantheism,[1] and to the four Castes.[2] The hymn is known as the Purusha Hymn. In it Purusha is described as a sacrifice, a victim cut to pieces and offered up as an oblation. And Purusha generally means, if not a man, at any rate a person, human or divine. I give both the full prose text as translated by Dr. Muir, and also a few stanzas of it as versified by Monier Williams, leaving, however, the word Purusha untranslated:—

'1. Purusha has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet. On every side enveloping the earth, he transcended it by a space of ten fingers.

[1] See above, p. 28.

[2] See above, p. 34. See Langlois, vol. iv. p. 340.

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2. Purusha is himself this whole, whatever has been, and whatever shall be. He is also the lord of immortality, since through food he expands. 3. Such is his greatness; and Purusha is superior to this. All existing things are a quarter of him, and that which is immortal in the sky is three quarters of him. 4. With three quarters of him Purusha mounted upwards. A quarter of him was again produced here below. He then became diffused everywhere among things animate and inanimate. 5. From him Viraj was born, and from Viraj, Purusha. As soon as born, he extended beyond the earth, both behind and before. 6. When the gods offered up Purusha as a sacrifice, the spring was its clarified butter, summer its fuel, and autumn the (accompanying) oblation. 7. This victim, Purusha, born in the beginning, they immolated on the sacrificial grass; with him as their offering, the gods, Sadhyas and Rishis, sacrificed. 8. From that universal oblation were produced curds and clarified butter. He (Purusha) formed these aerial creatures, and the animals, both wild and tame. 9. From that universal sacrifice sprang the hymns called Rich and Saman, the metres and the Yajush. 10. From it were produced horses, and all animals with two rows of teeth, cows, goats, and sheep. 11. When they divided Purusha, into how many parts did they distribute him? What was his mouth? What were his arms? What were called his thighs and feet? 12. The Brahman was his

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mouth; the Rajanya became his arms; the Vaisya was his thighs; the Sudra sprang from his feet. 13. The moon was produced from his soul; the sun from his eye; Indra and Agni from his mouth; and Vayu from his breath. 14. From his navel came the atmosphere; from his head arose the sky; from his feet came the earth; from his ear the four quarters: so they formed the worlds. 15. When the gods, in performing their sacrifice, bound Purusha as victim, there were seven pieces of wood laid for him round the fire, and thrice seven pieces of fuel employed. 16. With sacrifice the gods worshipped the sacrifice. These were the first institutions. These great beings attained to the heaven where the gods, the ancient Sadhyas, reside.' Monier Williams' translation begins:

'The embodied Spirit has a thousand heads,
A thousand eyes, a thousand feet around;
On every side enveloping the earth,
Yet filling space, no larger than a span.
He is himself this very Universe;
He is whatever is, has been, and shall be;
He is the lord of immortality.
All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths
Are that which is immortal in the sky.
From him, called Purusha, was born Viraj,
And from Viraj was Purusha produced,
Whom gods and holy men made their oblation.'[1]

Dr. K. M. Banerjea connects this very remarkable

[1] See Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 24, and above, p. 34.

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hymn with verse 2 of the 121st hymn of the same Book, in which Hiranyagarbha, who is identified as Prajapati,[1] the lord of creatures, is called '*Atmada,' giver of self,* 'whose shadow, whose death, is immortality to us.' And these verses from the hymns of the Rig-Veda he connects with the following text of the leading Brahmana of the Soma-Veda) 'The Lord of creatures (Prajapati) offered himself a sacrifice for the Devas.'[2]

Dr. Muir quotes two other hymns of the Rig-Veda, besides the Purusha hymn, in which god is represented as either the agent, the object, or the subject of sacrifice. In x. 81, 5, the god Visvakarman is said to sacrifice himself or to himself; and in verse 6, to offer up heaven and earth. And in x. 13, 3, it is said that the gods sacrificed to the (supreme) god, or that they offered him up.[3]

The following, from a celebrated Brahmana of the White Jajur-Veda, is to the same effect:—

'To them, (the Devas), the Lord of creatures gave himself. He became their sacrifice. Sacrifice is food for the gods. He having given himself to them, made a reflection of himself which is sacrifice. Therefore they say the Lord of creatures is a sacrifice, for he made it a reflection of himself. By means of this sacrifice he redeemed himself from them.'[4]

[1] Müller's *Hibbert Lectures* (1878), p. 294. Dr. Banerjea's *Aryan Witness*, p. 203.

[2] *Tandya Maha Brahmana*, p. 410.

[3] Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v. p. 372. See below, pp. 92, 146, 243.

[4] *Satapatha Brahmana*, p. 836.

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This same Prajapati is elsewhere represented as 'one half mortal and the other half immortal, and with that which was mortal he was afraid of death.'[1]

Connect these texts again with other texts proving that these *devas*, generally translated *gods*, were *immortalized mortals, deified men;* and this last text from an Aranyaka Brahmana of the Black Jajur-Veda:—

When the gods celebrated a sacrifice with Purusha as their oblation, the spring was its butter, summer its fuel, and autumn its (supplementary) oblation. When the gods celebrating the sacrifice bound Purusha as the victim, they immolated him, the sacrifice, on the grass, even him, the Purusha who was begotten in the beginning. With him as their offering, the gods, the Sadhyas and Rishis also sacrificed.'[2]

Consider all these texts together, and you will see the force of Dr. Banerjea's conclusion,—that it is not easy to account for the genesis of the idea underlying Prajapati, Hiranyagarbha, the Lord of creatures, or Purusha, the begotten in the beginning, call him by any name you like, offering himself a sacrifice for the *benefit of the devas* or deified mortals, 'except on the assumption of some primitive tradition of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' the only begotten of the Father, who, of his own accord, offered himself a sacrifice for men.

[1] *Satapatha Brahmana*, x. 1, 3, 1. Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 297.

[2] Aranyaka, 331, 333.

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Then with these may be connected the story of the Purusha-Medha of Narayana:—

'The Purusha Narayan (the original male) desired —I shall surpass all things, I shall become all this. He saw for five nights that *Purusha Medha* sacrifice. He took it. He sacrificed with it. Having sacrificed with it, he surpassed all things. He who, knowing this, sacrifices with the *Purusha Medha*, becomes everything—whoever knows this.'[1]

Dr. Banerjea has done great service to the Church of India by unearthing, if I may use the expression, these texts and showing how they may be used, after the apostolic example, in the interests of Christianity. Many other texts he has discovered and used in the same way, to which I cannot at present refer.

In connection with this subject might also be considered the singular position given to Agni as the high priest of the sacrifice, but I will take it up under the head of *Mediation*.

The strength of those who contend that human sacrifices were offered in Vedic times, lies not so much in the verses quoted from the hymns of the Rig-Veda, as in the story of Sunahsepha, given at length in the principal *Brahmana* of the same Veda. King Hurish Chundra had no son. He earnestly desired for one, and vowed that if one was given he would offer him in sacrifice to the god Varuna. His wish

[1] *Satapatha Brahmana*, p. 997. *Medha* means *Sacrifice*.

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was granted. To the son thus given, the father, on his arriving at maturity, imparted the secret. But the son said 'No,' and took his bow and left his father's home. Varuna, displeased, punished Hurish Chundra with dropsy. The son returned not, for long years, though he felt the stings of remorse as well as those of hunger. At last on meeting a Brahmin, attended by his wife and three young sons, he offered a hundred cows for one of the sons to be his substitute in the sacrifice to the god. The father laid hold on the eldest and said, 'I cannot part with him.' The mother clung to the youngest, and, weeping, said, 'I cannot part with him.' Then Sunahsepha, their second son, said, 'Father, I will go.' So he was purchased for a hundred cows. Then the King's son returned to his father, and said :—

'Father, this boy shall be my substitute.'
Then Hurish Chundra went to Varuna
And prayed, 'Accept this ransom for my son.'
The god replied, 'Let him be sacrificed,
A Brahmin is more worthy than a Kshattriya.'

Thus the king's son escaped, and preparations were made for the sacrifice of the Brahmin boy. Then difficulties arose as to who would bind him and who would kill him. The Brahmin on each occasion agreed to do it on the promise of an additional hundred of cows. The father whetted his knife to sacrifice the son.

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Then said the child, 'Let me implore the gods,
Haply they will deliver me from death.'
So Sunahsepha prayed to all the gods
With verses from the Veda, and they heard him.
Thus was the boy released from sacrifice,
And Hurish Chundra was restored to health.[1]

There are texts in the hymns that are intimately connected with this story, such as (i. 24, 12–13), 'May he whom the fettered Sunahsepha has invoked, may the regal Varuna set us free. Sunahsepha, seized and bound to the three-footed tree, has invoked the son of Aditi. May the regal Varuna, wise and irresistible, liberate him; may he let loose his bonds.' The hymn from which these words are extracted, and the six following hymns, are all attributed to Sunahsepha as their author. There is another allusion to him in hymn v. 2, 7: 'Thou hast liberated the fettered Sunahsepha from a thousand stakes, for he was patient in endurance: So, Agni, free us from our bonds.'

As our object is not so much to argue towards any conclusions, as to produce the texts or mantras bearing upon the subject, we leave the matter here.

From the discussion of the sacrifice we proceed to the inquiry, To whom was the sacrifice offered? The following very remarkable hymn fittingly introduces the question. Let us bear, however, in mind that the

[1] Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 29. *Aitareya Brahmana*, Haug's Edition, vii. 13.

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hymn has to do with a question of duty, and with the future action of the Rishi. We have to do with it as a question of fact. To whom did the Rishis, generally, offer sacrifices?

The hymn[1] runs:—

1. 'In the beginning there arose Hiranyagarbha (the source of golden light). He was the only born lord of all that is. He established the earth and this sky;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

2. 'He who gives life, he who gives strength; whose blessing all the bright gods desire; whose shadow is immortality; whose shadow is death;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

3. 'He who through his power is the only king of the breathing and awakening world; he who governs all, man and beast;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

4. 'He whose power these snowy mountains, whose power the sea proclaims, with the distant river; he whose these regions are, as it were, his two arms;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

5. 'He through whom the sky is bright and the

[1] i. 121. Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 295.

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earth firm; he through whom the heaven was established—nay, the highest heaven; he who measured out the light in the air;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

6. 'He to whom heaven and earth, standing firm by his will, look up trembling inwardly; he over whom the rising sun shines forth;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

7. 'Wherever the mighty water-clouds went, where they placed the seed and lit the fire, thence arose he who is the only life of the bright gods;—

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

8. 'He who by his might looked even over the water-clouds, the clouds which gave strength and let the sacrifice; he *who is god above all gods*;[1]

'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

9. 'May he not destroy us—he the creator of the earth; or he the righteous, who created the heaven; he who also created the bright and mighty waters;—

'Who[2] is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

[1] Froude, Celsus, *Fraser's Magazine* (1878), p. 131.

[2] This pronoun *who* (*ka*) was worshipped as a god, and regarded as the same with Prajapati.

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10 'Prajapati, no other than thou embraces all these created things. May that be ours which we desire when sacrificing to thee. May we be lords of wealth.'

If the Rishi's question is to be answered by counting the number of votaries, or by the greatness of the veneration given to any special text of the Veda, or by the solemnity and universality of his worship, then *the god* of the Rishi must have been the *Sun.* All Hindus of every caste worship the Sun every day, and they do so with a seeming solemnity such as is not generally seen in any of their other worships; and of all texts in all the Scriptures of the Hindus, including the four Vedas, there is none that can be regarded as coming even second in sacredness to the *Gayatri* (iii. 62, 10): '*Tat Savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat,*' *i.e.* 'We meditate that excellent glory of the divine *Savitri* (the *Sun*); may he stimulate our understandings [or hymns or rites].'

Savitri is identical with *Surya,* the *Sun,* though sometimes distinguished from him. See Muir's *Studies,* p. 66; *Texts,* vol. iii. p. 114. Müller's *Chips,* p. 19.

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IX.

MONOTHEISM OR POLYTHEISM?

AFTER quoting the above hymn in full, Max Müller adds: 'With such ideas as these springing up in the minds of the Vedic poets, we should have thought that the natural development of their old religion could only have been towards monotheism, towards the worship of one personal God, and that thus in India also the highest form would have been reached which man feels inclined to give to the Infinite, after all other forms and names have failed. But it was not so.'[1]

The question as to whom did the Indo-Aryans offer sacrifice or worship to, in Vedic times, is of primary importance. It must be clearly distinguished from two other questions very intimately related to it, and frequently confounded with it. I mean the questions, Whom did the Indo-Aryans worship in *Pre*-Vedic times? and whom in *Post*-Vedic times? Hints and allusions may be found in the Veda of a state of matters very different from the then existing state; and there may be also shadows visible of coming

[1] Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 296.

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events. Still neither of these can be regarded as really descriptive of Vedic times or of the Vedic religion. It is also necessary that we should bear in mind that the Rig-Veda is not the work of one author or of one age. Like the Jewish Psalter, it is the work of many authors, extending over a period of many centuries. We could scarcely expect, therefore, that there should be much consistency of thought or similarity of expression in a book composed of such materials. As a matter of fact, the Rig-Veda Sanhita has no claim to such. The mythology or Polytheism of some hymns is very marked and distinct. In others it is indistinct and hazy. Some hymns, in the absence of all others, might be regarded as theistic, or at least as henotheistic. Others are flatly contradictory of such an idea. Again, the mythology of one Rishi is thoroughly inconsistent with that of others, or rather with those of others. For there seem to be as many mythologies as there are Rishis.

It is also necessary that we should look carefully into the meanings of those terms on which the discussion will chiefly turn. I refer more particularly to the terms Monotheism and Polytheism. One might suppose that no explanations were required; for these words seem to have such a clearness and distinctiveness of meaning as to render definitions unnecessary. Does not *Monotheism* mean the belief in and worship of *one God*; *Polytheism*, the belief in and worship of *more than one God*? Yes, but it is necessary to define

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more fully still. It will be observed that we conjoin the belief with the practice. There might be a people worshipping one god only, while believing in other gods, to the extent of believing in them as false gods, worshipped by other nations undeservedly, but between whom and the one living and true God, the great Creator, there is believed to be no likeness or comparison. To such, if there be any such, we would hesitate in denying the name monotheists. Then there might be individuals believing in many gods as equally or about equally true and powerful, who select one from among the lot and worship him alone, looking to him as likely to take special interest in them because of their special interest in him. A Hindu cannot worship the 330,000,000 gods and goddesses, just, to use a Hindu illustration, as he cannot grasp ten branches of a tree together. He therefore selects one,—Siva, Rama, Krishna, or Hari,—and worships him only, while professing to believe in all. We have no hesitation in characterising such a man as a polytheist. Again, suppose that under various names, quite distinct in themselves, referring to quite distinct manifestations of the works of God, or to separate and distinct attributes of God, the people actually, consciously or unconsciously, worshipped the great Creator, would they be monotheists? The answer to this question would depend largely on their consciousness of the unity of the objects of their worship. If they were taken up with the diversity

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and plurality, rather than with the unity, more especially if the diversity and plurality amounted to a practical exclusion of unity in thought and worship, then there would be no hesitation in characterising them as polytheists. This latter, I think, we shall find as we proceed, was the state of matters with some of the Rishis in Vedic times, whatever may have been the case in Pre-Vedic or in Post-Vedic times. They may have had, as Max Müller remarks, 'a relapse into monotheism,' just as the Shemites had many a relapse into polytheism; but their ordinary normal condition was that of polytheists.

They may have had also no manufactured idols, and yet be really chargeable with the sin of idolatry. If by idolatry be meant only the worship of graven images, and by polytheism only the acknowledgment of separate gods with *equal powers and perfect independence*, then the Rig-Veda may be acquitted of the charge of idolatry, and by some even of polytheism. But such distinctions are not received as true definitions of these terms, as far as *sin against God* is concerned. The sin of idolatry is not limited to such a meaning of the word. The worship of any substance or any imagination or idea not truly descriptive of God, or worthy of him, must be sinful, though there be no graven images employed. Any acknowledgment of any gods, material or immaterial, to the exclusion of, or in addition to, the worship of the one true God, is polytheism. If so, then the

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Rishis of the Rig-Veda, in inculcating and sanctioning the worship of the elements and the heavenly host, even supposing these only to be the objects of their worship, were guilty of the sins of idolatry and polytheism. Sabaism (or Tsabaism), the worship of the heavenly host, was regarded as both polytheistic and idolatrous.

'The true evil of idolatry is this,' says De Quincey. 'There is one sole idea of God which corresponds adequately to his total nature. Of this idea two things may be affirmed, the first being—that it is the root of all absolute grandeur, of all truth, of all moral perfection; the second being—that, natural and easy as it seems when once unfolded, it could only have been unfolded by revelation, and, to all eternity, he that started with a false conception of God could not, through any effort of his own, have exchanged it for a true one. All idolaters alike, though not all in equal degrees, by intercepting the idea of God through the prism of some representative creature, that *partially* resembles God, refract, splinter, and distort that idea.

'Even the idea of light, of the pure, solar light—the old Persian symbol of God—has that depraving necessity. Light itself, besides being an *imperfect* symbol, is an incarnation for us. However pure in itself, or in its original divine manifestation, for us it is incarnated in forms and in matter that are *not* pure; it gravitates towards physical alliances, and

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therefore towards unspiritual pollutions. And all experience shows that the tendency for man, left to his own imagination, is downwards. The purest symbol, derived from created things, can and will condescend to the grossness of inferior human natures, by submitting to mirror itself in more and more carnal representative symbols, until finally the mixed element of resemblance to God is altogether buried and lost.

Of God, by this succession of imperfect interceptions, falls more and more under the taint and limitation of the *alien* elements associated with all created things; and, for the ruin of all moral grandeur in man, every idolatrous nation left to itself will gradually bring round the idea of God into the idea of a powerful demon. Many things check and disturb this tendency for a time; but finally, and under that intense civilisation to which man intellectually is always hurrying under the eternal evolutions of physical knowledge, such a degradation of God's idea, ruinous to the *moral* capacities of man, would undoubtedly perfect itself, were it not for the kindling of a purer standard by revelation. Idolatry, therefore, is not merely *an* evil, and one utterly beyond the power of social institutions to redress, but, in fact, it is the fountain of all other evils that seriously ménaces the destiny of the human race;'[1] and it is so by its degradations of the object of worship. This is done

[1] De Quincey's *Works*, vol. viii. pp. 506-508. *Notes on Landor.*

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by the worship of the sun, the thunder, the lightning, the dawn, the storms, or the clouds, as much as by the graven images of Jupiter, Mercury, or Mars. In fact, we think the divine idea is degraded more in the former than in the latter, for a good man is far more noble and more to be admired than any natural force or phenomenon.

Max Müller, who is very partial to the Rig-Veda, to whose elucidation he has devoted his life, writes:[1] 'If we must employ technical terms, the religion of the Veda is polytheism, not monotheism.' His idea is, that the Aryans represented the divinity by various names taken from natural phenomena, which names, not being those of attributes, but of things, appearances, and forces, led the people very readily to personify them, and to create a mythology about these names; and this mythology had manifested itself at and before the time in which most of these hymns were composed. Hence this special kind of polytheism has been called physiolatry and meteorolatry.

Monier Williams' idea is very much the same. He asks us, to the better understanding of the hymns, to bear in mind that the deified forces addressed in them were probably not represented by images or idols in the Vedic period, though doubtless the early worshippers clothed their gods with human form in their own imaginations.[2] However free from the

[1] Müller's *Chips*, vol. i. p. 27.
[2] Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 15.

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grossness of the image-worship of modern Hinduism their religion may have been, these worshippers are chargeable with the deification and worship of fire, air, the atmosphere in motion or at rest, the sun, moon, dawn, Soma, prayer, etc., and with all the refracting, splintering, and distorting of the idea of God which is implied in such worship. And this is a polytheism which must have been dishonouring to God, and most injurious to the moral and spiritual nature of man.

It may be contended, from a merely philosophical point of view, that the *primitive* religion could not be either monotheistic or polytheistic; for the first implies a denial of many gods before there were any gods thought of or believed in, and the second implies a worshipping of many simultaneously and from the beginning, that is, worshipping many gods *before* they had worshipped one, which is absurd. All this is true, on the supposition that there was no revelation from God himself making known the one God, and forbidding any yielding to the unnatural but strong inclination of sinful men to worship the many. The worship of a single god, as the mere antecedent to the worship of the many, would not, however, be monotheism as formulated in the statement, 'there *is but* one God,' but henotheism, 'there *is* one God.' This state of things is not, however, that described in the Rig-Veda. The Jews had preserved the original primitive revelation given to our first

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parents in Paradise and renewed from time to time to their descendants, but they frequently relapsed into idolatry. The Aryans very soon after the flood would seem to have gone most determinately into the worship of the many—the various forms of the creature, God's work, to the neglect of the great Creator, God himself. At least, that is the state in which we find them in the Rig-Vedic hymns, the very oldest records we have of the Aryan family.

In the 27th hymn of the 1st Book we have, as far as this point is concerned, the spirit of the hymns as a whole. As versified by Mr. J. D. B. Gribble, C.S., the text runs:—

'We will worship the great gods,
And worship the small ones.
We will worship the young gods,
And worship the old ones.
We will worship all gods,
To the best of our power;
Nor may I forget to worship
The gods of old times.'[1]

From the beginning to the end of the Rig-Veda, it is a worshipping of the many. The first hymn is a worshipping of Agni; the second is a worshipping of Vayu, Indra and Vayu, Mitra and Varuna; the third is a worshipping of the Aswins (the young gods), of Indra, Viswadevas or collective divinities, and Sarasvati; and so on they proceed with hymns to Indra,

[1] See *The Land of the Tamulians*, by the Rev. E. R. Baierlein, p. 51.

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the Maruts or storm gods, the Apris or river gods, Ritu, Brahmanaspati, Prajapati, Savitri, Aryaman, the Adityas, Pushan, Rudra, Ushas, Surya, Soma, the Ribhus (deified men), the earth, the sky, Swanaya, Bhavayavya, heaven and earth, the horse, Rati, Pitu, Brihaspati, water, grass, sacrificial posts, the sun, etc. etc., thirty-three, or three hundred and three thousand and thirty and nine in all, according to the Veda itself. All these named are deities to whom hymns are dedicated by the Rishi composers of the 1st Book. Of the 121 hymns contained in the 1st Vol. of Professor Wilson's translation, 37 are to Agni and 45 to Indra, 12 to the Maruts and 11 to the Aswins, 4 to Ushas and 4 to the Viswadevas, and the remainder to inferior divinities. There is the same variety of gods and goddesses addressed in the other volumes, save that the 9th Book contains one hundred and fourteen hymns all addressed to Soma. In some of these, Soma is addressed as the supreme god, the creator.

We may remark briefly on the singular combinations, formed in the Veda, of the gods worshipped. We find, for example, heaven and earth deified, and hymns addressed to them as the parents, not only of the human race, but also of the gods. 'At the sacrifices,' sings one Rishi, 'I worship with offerings Heaven and Earth, the promoters of righteousness, the great, the wise, the energetic, who having gods for their offspring, thus lavish, with the gods, the

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choicest blessings in consequence of our hymn. . . . Confer on us, O Heaven and Earth, through your goodwill, wealth with goods and hundreds of cows.' 'Being lauded, may the mighty Heaven and Earth bestow on us great renown and power.'[1] The Greek and Roman mythologies retained the same myths under the names of Uranus (Ouranos) the Heaven, and Gæa the Earth, the parents of many sons including Kronos or Saturn, the father of gods and men. That heaven and earth were regarded as real divinities is clear from the epithets by which they are described, such as wise, promoters of righteousness, as above; and omniscient, innocuous or beneficent, the great parents of sacrifices, as well as of gods and men; father and mother; *devaputra*, having gods for their children; *janitri*, parents; the parents not only of the gods collectively, but of individual gods, as Brihaspati, Indra, the sun, and Agni. 'The divine Heaven and Earth, the parents of the gods, have augmented Brihaspati by their power;' 'they have fashioned the self-resplendent and prolific (Indra) for energy; ye two preserve fixed the position of your unswerving son (the sun).' They are also described as having begotten Agni.[2] But how they themselves were produced is a question that has puzzled many of these Rishis, and many were the

[1] i. 159; i. 160, 5.

[2] R.-V., iv. 56, 2; vi. 70, 6; x. 35, 3; i. 106, 3; i. 185, 1, 4; vi. 17, 7; vii. 53, 1; x. 11, 9; vii. 97, 8; viii. 50, 2; i. 159, 3; x. 2, 7.

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answers given. One asks: 'Which of these two was the first, and which the last? How have they been produced? Sages, who knows?' No doubt other mantras composed by other Rishis can be quoted giving a different view of them as far as their fatherhood and motherhood are concerned; but it is very patent (see hymns i. 112, 159, 160, 185; ii. 32, etc., specially dedicated to them) that they were regarded and formally worshipped as divinities.

There are other dualisms, not so very formal or natural, if we may call any dualism of gods natural, such as Mitra and Varuna; Indra and Varuna; Indra and Agni; Agni and Soma; Indra and Vayu; Vayu and Indra; Indra and Soma, the joint creators of heaven and earth (vi. 72, 2); Vishnu and Indra; Indra and the Maruts; Brahmanaspati and Brihaspati; Soma and Pushan, also the joint creators of heaven and earth (ii. 40, 1), etc. etc.[1] This dualism is quite a favourite idea with some Rishis, so much so that they speak of some of the gods going in couples like other things and persons that go in pairs. We do not refer to the fact that many of the gods, such as Indra, Agni, etc., are represented as having wives. The dualism referred to in all this is that of pairs of good divinities. There is also another kind of dualism not obscurely spoken of. The Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjea shows that they had the dualism of the Parsis, a good god and a bad one. His words

[1] See Indices to Wilson's translation at the end of the several vols.

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are: 'The distinctive feature of the Zoroastrian doctrine of *two* eternal principles of good and evil respectively appears in the sacred records of both,' *i.e.* in the Veda and the Zendavesta. Ahura Mazda, the good principle, and Anghro-mainyus, the evil principle, 'were also acknowledged in the Rig-Veda.'[1]

Thus there are various different dualisms of gods found in the Rig-Veda. There is also a tritheism referred to in most unequivocal terms, as in the following classification of the Vedic gods by Yaska in his Nirukta (vii. 5) as being that given by the ancient expositors of the Veda who preceded him:— 'There are three deities, according to the expounders of the Veda, viz. Agni, whose place is on the earth; Vayu, or Indra, whose place is in the atmosphere; and Surya, whose place is in the sky.'[2] It is rather curious that every one of these three is described in mantras quoted above as a son of Heaven and Earth. Muir understands these texts not as limiting the number to three, but classifying them under three heads, in accordance with another text (x. 63, 2) which says: 'All your names, ye gods, are to be revered, adored, and worshipped; ye who were born from Aditi, from the waters, ye who are born from the earth, listen here to my invocation.' See also x.

[1] *The Aryan Witness*, p. 32. R.-V., i. 24, where Varuna is called the eminently wise *Asura* (Ahura), and the principle of evil appears under the designation of *Nir-riti*, the *unrighteousness*, equivalent, according to Sayana, to *Papadevata*, 'the deity of sin.'

[2] Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. iv. p. 160.

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49, 2; 65, 5. The 24th hymn commences with the question, 'Of whom [sometimes made the god *Ka*], or of which divinity, of the immortals shall we invoke the auspicious name;' and answers in the next verse, 'Let us invoke the auspicious name of Agni, the first divinity of the immortals,' implying a second. The Rishi accordingly proceeds in the very next verse to invoke Savitri, the sun, the possessor of wealth. Then the remaining ten verses are invocations to Varuna, in whom the Rishi had apparently the greatest confidence. The concluding invocation is beautiful:—'O Varuna, loosen for me the upper, the middle, the lower bond (of sin); so, son of Aditi [the mother of all the gods], shall we, through faultlessness in thy worship, become freed from sin.' Rishi Sunahsepha[1] seems to have made up his mind to a triplet of gods, but hesitates as to which of them shall be his favourite. He is satisfied that Agni is first, but that there is on the whole more hope of help from Varuna, as is clear not only from the concluding verses of the hymn before us, but also from the following hymn, which is altogether dedicated to Varuna. Still his third hymn he dedicates to Agni so as to give him no offence; his fourth is also to Agni and the Viswadevas, the collective divinities.[2] Evidently he sympathises much with the Rishi who asked over and

[1] See above, p. 88.

[2] He is the author of other three hymns in which Indra is the favourite god, the supplanter of Varuna, as represented by Mr. James Darmesteter.

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over again, '*Who* is the god to whom we shall offer the sacrifice?' Among so great a multiplicity, it would seem to be difficult to choose, more especially when all seem to possess almost equal powers and equal attractions.

The favourite number is, however, 33, as in the following mantras:—'Come hither . . . together with the thrice eleven gods, to drink our nectar.' 'Agni, the wise gods lend an ear to their worshipper. God, with the ruddy steeds, who lovest praise, bring hither these three and thirty.' It must be remembered that Agni is the messenger of the gods. 'Ye gods who are eleven in the sky, who are eleven on earth, and who, in your glory, are eleven dwellers in the atmospheric waters, do ye welcome this our offering.' 'May the three over thirty gods who have visited our sacrificial grass recognise us, and give us double.' 'Ye who are the three and thirty gods worshipped by Manu, when thus praised, ye become the destroyers of our foes.' 'Aswins, associated with all the thrice eleven gods, with the Waters, the Maruts, the Bhrigus, and united with the Dawn and the Sun, drink the Soma.' 'O pure Soma, all these gods, thrice eleven in number, are in thy secret.'[1] It is impossible to state with confidence who these 33 were, as not only was not the highest Hindu authority on this subject able to make up his mind with regard to it, but in these very

[1] R.-V., i. 34, 11; i. 45, 2; i. 139, 11; viii. 28, 1; viii. 30, 2; viii. 35, 3; ix. 92, 4.

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mantras we see that the 33 did not include all the gods. We read of 'Agni and the 33;' 'the Aswins and the 33;' 'the 33 and the Maruts, the Dawn, and the Sun,' all of whom were regarded and worshipped as distinct independent divinities. In another hymn (iii. 9, 9), 'Three hundred, three thousand, thirty and nine gods' are said to 'have worshipped Agni.'[1] An ingenious and learned Sanskrit scholar, M. Langlois (Rig-Veda, ii. p. 229), gives the following explanation:—

First the number, . . .	33
Then the same 33 thus, . .	303
Then again thus, . . .	3003
Added together, . .	3339

And other 00 added, making it 303,039. The later Hindus putting all the 0s together and making seven in all, the number was raised to 330,000,000. If this be not gods many—polytheism—I do not know what polytheism is.

Further, it is to be noticed that some of these are classified according to their parentage,—for example, we read much of the Adityas, so called because they are regarded as children of one mother, the goddess Aditi. Their names are Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Daksha, and Ansa. Indra is sometimes spoken of as a son of the same mother, and hence called an Aditya. He is elsewhere called the son of Nishtigri,

[1] Wilson, vol. iii. p. 7. R.-V., iii. 9, 9.

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whom Sayana identifies as Aditi. He is said to have conquered Heaven by austerity.[1]

Believing, as we Christians do, in the common origin of all the families of the earth—that all are descended from Noah and Adam, and that they and their descendants, for some time before they separated, worshipped the one living and true God, we must believe that originally the ancestors of the great Aryan family worshipped the one God, and Him alone. And as we ascend into the past, and acquire a fuller understanding of the oldest forms of the Vedic religion, we find a nearer approximation to a knowledge of the one living and true God. But by the time the hymns came to be composed and collected, an undoubted polytheism prevailed. This is seen, not only in the number of gods worshipped, but in their separate individuality, their distinct traits of character, and their personal histories. It is quite true that to almost every one of them, supreme sovereignty is given; but such is given by modern worshippers to Vishnu, Siva, Hari, Ganpati, etc. etc. Take for example the following to Indra:—'There is no one like thee in heaven and earth; he is not born and will not be born. O mighty Indra, we call upon thee as we go fighting for cows and horses,'[2]—which, I suppose, means as we go, like the Keltic Katerans of old, a cattle-lifting; or like the

[1] R.-V., ii. 27, 1; x. 110, 12; x. 167, 1.

[2] See also Wilson, vol. ii. p. 257.

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modern Italian banditti, going to rob and steal, and then share the booty at the shrine of Mary. In the same hymn, the same Indra is quite familiarly addressed. The worshippers anxious for wealth, seated together near the libation, 'like flies round the honey,' 'have placed their desire upon Indra, as we put our foot upon a chariot. Make for the sacred gods a hymn that is not small, that is well set and beautiful. Many snares pass by him who abides with Indra, through his sacrifice.' Then follows a verse which reminds one of Martin Elginbrodde's prayer:

'Here lie I, Martin Elginbrodde.
Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God,
As I wad do were I Lord God
And ye were Martin Elginbrodde.'

The verse[1] we refer to runs: 'If I were lord of as much as thou, I should support the sacred bard, thou scatterer of wealth, I should not abandon him to misery.' He was undoubtedly placed as the highest of all the gods by some of the Rishis in some of their hymns. By others a subordinate place is given to him. He is described 'without a fellow, unequalled by men;' from which words it might be supposed that Indra was conceived as the one only God. We do not think so. Indra throughout is regarded as so very human, that such language as the above addressed to him proves nothing in the

[1] See also R.-V., vii. 32, 18, 19; viii. 14, 1, 2; viii. 52, 2; and Müller's *Anct. Sanskrit*, p. 545, and Muir's *Studies*, p. 48.

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absence of everything of a more convincing nature. It shows only that strong language was frequently used by the worshipper while addressing Indra. But all must admit equally flattering language was addressed to almost every member of the Aryan Pantheon, and is so still to all the many gods and goddesses of modern Hinduism. The same is found in the words used to the horse when about to be sacrificed. (See above, p. 80 : Horse, 'who art one with Varuna.') In the very next sentence Agni, the lord of fire, is addressed by the poet. He is spoken of as the first god, not inferior even to Indra.[1] Sometimes, while Agni is invoked, Indra may be forgotten; for there is not competition always between the two, nor a rivalry between them and the other gods. Some may regard this as a most important feature in the religion of the Veda, seldom taken into consideration by those who have written on the history of ancient polytheism. But we do not think so, nor do we know that the one god *is* forgotten when the other is so praised. In the very hymn before us, reference is made to the other gods; then, further, many of the hymns, as a matter of fact, are addressed to both Indra and Agni together. Of the nine verses in the second hymn of the first book, three are addressed to Vayu, three to Indra, and three to Indra and Vayu conjointly; and three to Mitra and Varuna. The

[1] See Muir's *Studies*, pp. 53 and 54, and Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 532. See below, p. 185.

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twenty-first hymn is addressed to Indra and Agni, both of them like 'twa brithers' are addressed as 'both copious drinkers of the Soma juice,' as the 'two who are fierce,' 'who are mighty and guardians of the assembly,' and they are asked to make the Rakhsasas 'destitute of progeny.' The hymnist then prays for the two—'By this unfailing sacrifice, be you rendered vigilant, Indra and Agni.'

Hymn 39 commences with the words to Indra: 'Voracious drinker of the Soma juice, although we be unworthy, do thou, Indra, of boundless wealth, enrich us with thousands of excellent cows and horses;' and so on it proceeds to the end of the seventh stanza, each stanza ending with the same prayer—'for thousands of excellent cows and horses.' It is not often that the personal attractions of the gods are dwelt on. But in the second stanza of the same hymn Indra is spoken of as 'he of the handsome, prominent nose,' as elsewhere possessed of 'good lips' and 'beautiful chin' (i. 9, 3), and again, 'the long-necked, large-bellied, strong-armed Indra' (viii. 17, 8); and the splendour of his dress and decorations are referred to (Wilson, vol. i. p. 223). In addition to the seven times repeated prayer for the 1000 of cows and horses, there are also prayers that 'this ass, our adversary, praising thee with such discordant speech, may be destroyed,' that 'every one that reviles us be destroyed,' and 'every one that does us injury be slain.' We give a versified translation of the hymn below.

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James Darmesteter, no mean authority on this subject, writing in the October (1879) number of the *Contemporary Review*, contends that the sovereignties of the gods of the Aryans were not organized republics, but monarchies under kings:—Zeus in Greece, Jupiter in Italy, Varuna in India, Odin in Germany, and Ahura Mazda in Persia. Varuna (the sky), the god of law and order, the universal encompasser, maker and upholder of heaven and earth, king of gods and men, is described as omnipotent and omniscient, the judge of all. Mr. Darmesteter contends that Zeus is synonymous with Ouranos, which is only another form of the word Varuna, which in Greece soon lost its meaning as a common name for the sky, but kept it longer among the Indo-Aryans; that as Zeus was father of Athene, so Varuna was of Atharvan, the fire-god, and of Bhrigu, the thunderer; that the supreme god of the Aryans was never a god of unity in the sense that Adonai, or Jehovah, is represented in the Jewish Scriptures, and ever was. There was by the side of Varuna 'a number of gods, acting of their own accord, and often of independent origin.' If Varuna, the all-encircling god of the heavens, early rose to the supreme rank, others 'with more dramatic action, revealing themselves by sudden, unexpected events, maintained their ancient independence, and religious development led to some of them usurping the power of the king of the heavens.' So it was with the rise

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of Indra and Brahma. The former, as we have seen, in the course of time got to the highest throne in the Pantheon, and eclipsed his majestic rival Varuna, by the din of his resounding splendour. See that magnificent but comparatively modern hymn, each verse of which ends with the words, 'He, O man, is Indra.'[1] 'But the usurper does not enjoy his triumph long. In the heat of the victory he is already stung to the heart, mortally wounded by a new and majestic power, which is growing at his side, the power of prayer,' of sacrifice, of oblation, of Soma, of worship—in one word, of Brahma (which originally meant all these), whose reign begins to dawn towards the end of the Vedic period, and which is still in existence, not so much with the poor ignorant idolatrous polytheists, who have never set up temples to him, but rather with the learned, civilised scientific Brahmo theist, who claims personal inspiration. Just as Indra usurped Varuna's place, so Brahma in time usurped Indra's. And it was a woful degradation of the worshipping subjects to fall from the reign of Varuna to that of Brahma. We see the process illustrated in the 28th hymn, in which Indra is not very respectfully treated. The first half of the hymn is addressed to Indra, each verse ending with the request to Indra to recognise and partake of the effusions of the mortar, that is, the Soma juice, which he is ever drinking. In

[1] R.-V., ii. 12. Wilson, vol. ii. p. 235. R.-V., x. 86, ends each verse with the words, 'Indra is superior to all,' Langlois, vol. iv. p. 327.

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the next verse, the mortar itself is deified and prayed to. We have seen how the Soma juice also came to reign over a portion, if not the whole, of Indra's dominions. But *his* reign was only temporary, Brahma's,[1] on the other hand, seems likely to be of longer duration. By many he is believed to be renewing his youth. There are signs, however, that his reign is drawing to a close. Those who have taken him under their special protection, seem to have got ashamed of him. The caste mark is seen on the forehead, the name is on the sign-board over the door, but we hear nothing of his ancient history and origin, or of his peculiar qualities, or rather want of all attributes. Under his own peculiar name he is never spoken of, nor is his name ever seen in their public prints. We seem to hear the muttered threats to take down the sign, and to reprint it with the name of the original ruler in a somewhat new form, as *The Theistic Church of India*, or *New Dispensation*, or of setting up the still younger god Hari in his stead.

Indra was *only* in time dethroned, for he completely disgraced himself in the Epic period of Indian history. His character became so very disgraceful, not with drink only, his great sin in Vedic times, but even with worse crimes,[2] so that we cannot soil our pages with an account of it.

Professors Roth and Whitney and Dr. Muir[3] seem

[1] See p. 186. [2] See even i. 101, 1; i. 121, 2.
[3] Muir's *Studies*, p. 49.

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to entertain the same opinion in regard to Varuna's ancient supremacy and superior antiquity to Indra; and that during the Vedic age the high consideration originally attached to him was in course of being transferred to Indra. One circumstance is patent to any one reading the Veda in the original or in translation, that while Varuna occupies a most important position in the older hymns, he is nowhere in the later. There is not a single entire hymn addressed to him in the 10th Book. Varuna must have been worshipped by the whole Aryan family while Kelt, Teuton, Greek, Parsi, and Hindu had one religion and one home, but there is not a trace of Indra to be met with in the Western mythologies. If Indra had any existence in the earlier mythology of the Aryan family, it must have been confined to some obscure province. In some of the hymns,[1] as we have already seen, they are associated together, Muir thinks, with the view of enhancing the dignity of Indra by attaching him to the older and more venerable deity. They are called *friends*, suggesting the idea that some may have been regarding them as *rivals*, if not as *enemies*. Dr. Muir remarks in regard to the hymns in the 7th Book (82-85), in which they are conjoined, that 'these passages are consistent with the supposition that the two gods were felt to have been rivals, and that their author sought to reconcile their conflicting claims.'[2] In some half a dozen different

[1] i. 17; iv. 41; iv. 42; vii. 82-85, etc. [2] Muir's *Studies*, p. 52.

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hymns the singular expression *Anindra*, 'an unbeliever in Indra,' occurs, suggestive of the same fact. In viii. 51, 2, Indra is said to 'have surpassed in power former generations,' which Professor Aufrecht understands to mean 'races of gods anterior to Indra.' In i. 101, 3, Varuna and Surya are said to be subject to the command of Indra; and in x. 89, 8, 9, Indra is said to be able to destroy the enemies of Mitra, Aryaman, and Varuna, thereby evincing, as Dr. Muir[1] argues, 'his superiority to those three gods.'

Mr. Keary, in his article on *Early Religious Development*, describes[2] the position of the Rishi composers of the Rig-Veda hymns, as not yet advanced so far that they can worship a being abstracted altogether from the phenomena of sense, but yet so far that their gods have more the character of *powers* than of natural objects. 'The consequence of this state of mind,' he adds, 'is the most real and unmixed polytheism. So long, and only so long, as the name of the god and the name of the element, the portion of nature, are thought of simultaneously, and the being is thus identified with the earth or sky or sea, and so long as no being is worshipped under a name which has ceased to be the expression of some outward phenomenon, does the polytheistic condition last. For while this is the case, it is im-

[1] Muir's *Studies*, p. 53.
[2] *Nineteenth Century*, August 1878, p. 368.

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possible that the deity of one element can have control over the god of another, each is tied and bound within the limits of his individual nature.' That this was the state of the Rishi's mind is, I think, unquestionable, in regard to the worship rendered to most of the gods of his pantheon. This stage Mr. Keary regards as intermediate between fetishism and monotheism. The theory that man, in a half-savage state, struggling for the bare necessaries of life, could not by mere reasoning or generalization find out God, may be quite true; but it is not true that in such a state he could not receive from without the truth that there is a God. For there are many instances in modern history of such savages believing in God and blessed in the truth. Christians believe that man in his primeval condition did receive from God himself the truth in regard to Himself. Our study of the Vedic religion, so far from contradicting this idea, has confirmed it in a remarkable manner. This does not, however, imply that the idea remained pure with man. Mr. Keary is very *positive* that while the nature-worship continued unchanged, the religion was no doubt polytheistic. 'There was nothing to give the god of one portion of nature any power or influence over the god of another portion, while he was thought of as that actual phenomenon or series of phenomena, and not in any way abstracted from them. So long as the sea or the sky was worshipped directly, not as representatives or

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habitations, but in their proper persons, so long might they reign side by side in the pantheon, and the religion remain a polytheism. But in time there comes a change. The connection between the world and natural phenomenon is gradually severed.' Then a monotheism becomes possible, but, Mr. Keary contends, not till then. Then also the mythologies proper originate and multiply. This state of matters is observable in the Rig-Veda. While Agni is fire and is worshipped as such, and Heaven, Earth, Sky, and Dawn are worshipped as such, there is pure polytheism as far as they are concerned. Because Dyaus and Varuna do recall some natural appearance, one after the other ceases to be the chief god, and his place is supplied by Indra, which has undoubtedly a less directly physical meaning. He is in turn superseded by Brahma, from which all physical and metaphysical attributes are abstracted. The myths which formed themselves about Agni never crystallized into distinct forms like those about Indra. Unfortunately these forms, as we have said, are not of the most inviting character, so that the least said of his post-Vedic history the better.

We, however, cannot refrain from giving the following litany, as embodying the whole tone of the Rig-Veda. It was frequently read to modern Brahmins, in the way of contrast to Matthew v. 44–48, by the Rev. E. R. Baierlein, missionary of the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Society, Bangalore :—

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1. Mightiest drinker of the Soma juice,
Although we are all unworthy of thee;
Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.

2. Handsome and powerful lord of nourishment,
Thy favour for ever be with us; and therefore,
Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.

3. Cast into sleep the two, each other regarding, servants of death,
That they fall into slumber and wake not again;
Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.

4. May those who are our enemies slumber;
But our friends, O hero, let them ever be wakeful:
Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.

5. Destroy, O Indra, this ass, our opponent,
Whose praises of thee sound harsh and discordant;
Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.

6. And grant that the storm in its crooked course
May alight afar off on the forest;
Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.

7. Destroy, thou mighty one, all who despise us;
Visit with death all those who would harm us; and

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Indra, whose riches are boundless, O grant us
Thousands of beautiful cows and of horses.[1]

Composed in a different tone, not so respectful to Indra, but praying for the same material riches and cherishing the same unchangeable feelings towards their enemies, I cull from the same source the following hymn :—

1. Our prayers and entreaties, O when will they reach thee, O Indra ?
When wilt thou give thy adorers the means of maintaining thousands ?
And when will my worship with riches and wealth be rewarded ?
And my ceremonies bear their fruit in subsistence ?

2. When bringest thou, Indra, the leaders and leaders together ?
And heroes and heroes to give us the victory in battle,
Who can conquer from foes the flocks which yield nourishment threefold ?
And when wilt thou, Indra, bestow on us wealth in abundance ?

3. When, mightiest Indra, when wilt thou deign to bestow
On those who now worship thee, food in sufficience ?

[1] i. 29. See Wilson's *Translation*, vol. i. p. 73. Also *The Land of the Tamulians*, p. 49. See above, p. 113.

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And when can we join to our prayers our thanksgiving?
When grantest thou herds in return for our offerings?
4, Give then, O Indra, thy worshippers food in abundance,
Herds ever increasing and horses renowned for their strength,
Let the pasture increase, and the cows that are easily milked,
And grant they may shine with fat and enjoyment of health.
5. Our foemen be pleased to despatch the wrong way [of death],
O mightiest Indra! thou hero, and conqueror of enemies!
O, may I not weary in praising the giver of bounties.
O satisfy, Indra, with food the Angiras.[1]

That most of the gods were *originally* mere personifications of those powers of nature on whom the people relied for good harvests and other material creature comforts, is very likely true. But it is equally true that they were conceived of, and worshipped, at the time the hymns were composed, as beings possessed of independent human wills, desires and powers. A late writer in the *Calcutta Review* (July 1879), not friendly disposed towards

[1] *The Land of the Tamulians*, p. 50.

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the Christian religion, is very positive on this point. He says: 'The idea of one god was not yet possible to the early Aryans. In their ignorance, they rather imagined a living actor in every striking natural phenomenon which arrested their imagination. The rising sun dispelling darkness and vivifying the earth; Indra hurling the thunder and shaking the earth and the heavens, and compelling the reluctant clouds (so it was believed) to give rain for the good of man; Varuna or the sky, eternally bending over the fertile earth, always changing in light and shade, yet eternally the same; the beauteous moon, fire, air, and the elements,—these and deities like these were invoked to bestow health and comfort, to increase the cattle and prosper the crops, and above all to help the white men (Aryans) against the black aborigines (Dasyas) in the great war which continued for ages, and which ended in the conquest of the whole of India by the nobler race. We see in this religion not the conception of one deity which enters into the belief of races more advanced in knowledge than the early Aryans of India. In the Vedanta we find the first distinct conception of the idea of one true God.' Such is the conclusion of the writer on *Recent Investigations into Archaic Forms of Religion;* and we quote it, not because we believe *his theory* to be true, but because we do believe that the polytheistic nature of the Vedic hymns is of so pronounced a character as almost to justify even such sweeping generalizations.

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Dr. Muir's position does not differ much from the above. He says these hymns 'are the productions of simple men, who, under the influence of the most impressive phenomena of nature, saw everywhere the presence and agency of divine powers, who imagined that each of the great provinces of the universe was directed and animated by its own separate deity, and who had not yet risen to a clear idea of one supreme creator and governor of all things. This is shown not only by the special functions assigned to particular gods, but in many cases by the very names which they bear, corresponding to those of some of the elements or of the celestial luminaries.' (*Studies*, p. 142.)

Ram Chundra Ghose writes: 'As could be the various conceptions of the different poets, so the natures of the gods must have differentiated. The same god is said in one hymn to be supreme and equal, and again in another inferior to others. However, the whole nature of these ideal and imaginary gods is still transparent; they are merely names of natural phenomena and without being; they are the creatures of man, and not his creators. Here names play with us.' They were undoubtedly real enough with those old Rishis. They expected blessings, chiefly temporal, it is true; still blessings, cows and horses, from the deities to whom they gave the Soma juice and their prayers. Some of them occasionally also expected from the same gods spiritual blessings,

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the removal of sin and guilt from their souls. They expected the sacrifice, especially the Soma juice, to have a very decided effect upon the gods; and the character of each god was so distinct from those of the others, that mythological dictionaries founded upon these distinctions have been written.

There are not only gods many, but also goddesses, though but few, and most of them of comparatively little importance, save Aditi, Ushas, and Prithivi. The wives of Indra, Agni, and Varuna, called respectively Indrani, Agnani, Varunani, are not associated with their husbands as objects of worship, not even Lakshmi and Sarasvati, any more than other Apsaras or river goddesses. Aditi, the mother of many of the Aryan gods, is by far the most interesting. Daksha was, however, before Aditi. 'For Aditi was born, O Daksha, she who is thy daughter; after her the gods were born, the blessed, who share in immortality.' It is the story of the earth, the elephant, and the tortoise over again. Yet Max Müller contends that the story of Daksha, the powerful being, the mother of Aditi, the infinite, the mother of the gods, is at least as old as 1000 B.C.

Then there are such divinities as the Maruts, with whom Indra sometimes quarrels lustily, but who are more generally his friends and boon companions; the Apsaras, who are represented as the wives of the Gandharvas, and who can change their forms, love and favour gambling, and can produce derangement

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of mind. As such they are feared as demons, appeased by incantations, and remind one of the fetishes of the negroes. The Lakshmis are partly beneficent, partly mischievous; the Ribhus and the Devas are deified heroes or glorified men. Hymn 110 of the first book is addressed to the Ribhus. Verse 2 runs: 'When, Ribhus, you were amongst my ancestors, yet immature in wisdom, but desirous of enjoying the Soma libations, retired to the forest to perform penance, then, sons of Sudhanwan, through the plenitude of your completed devotions, you came to the sacrificial hall of the worshipper Savitri. Then Savitri bestowed upon you immortality.' (See above, p. 47.)

Monier Williams thinks, with Max Müller, that there are traces in the Veda of a pre-existent faith more or less monotheistic in its nature; but that 'in the Veda this unity soon diverged into various ramifications. Only a few of the hymns appear to contain the simple conception of one divine self-existent Being, and even in those the idea of one God present in all nature is somewhat nebulous and undefined;' and Max Müller adds: 'The consciousness that all the deities are but different names of one and the same godhead breaks forth here and there in the Veda. But it is far from being general.' He then gives a verse very frequently quoted for the same purpose from a hymn (i. 146) of extraordinary length, and of great unintelligibility, con-

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taining 52 verses. The 46th verse runs: 'They have styled him [the sun] Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, then he is the beautiful winged Garutmut; that which is one, the wise call it in divers manners, they call it Agni, Yama, Matarisman;' or as translated by Wilson, for 'learned priests call one by many names, as they speak of Agni, Yama, Matarisman.'

We think a great deal too much has been made of this verse. It proves that the sun was spoken of sometimes by various names, and that so also were some of the other gods, but we think nothing more. Pundit Mohesh Chunder Nayaratna, C.I.E., the learned Principal of the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, writes, in his tract on Dayananda Sarasvati: 'It is not clear who is addressed in this *mantra*. The author of the *Nirukta* says that it is addressed to fire. Others say that it is addressed to the sun. Be that as it may, it is, to say the least of it, difficult to understand how the word *Agni* (as Dyananda contends) can mean *Iswara* (God). This *mantra* is addressed to some one deity, and it has already been seen that, in praising any particular deity, it is usual to address him under the names of several other deities, with a view to magnify his powers.' Other literatures possess similar idioms. Besides, the hymn itself is peculiar, not from its length alone, but also from its style and subject-matter. It is more in the style of the Atharva-Veda than of the Rig, if not of

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the Upanishads. Indeed it does occur in the Atharva-Veda in broken bits scattered here and there, as has been found by Mr. Whitney. Further, there are matters in it, such as invocations to the family cow, which must be regarded as comparatively recent; and the text of the Veda or Vedas is spoken of as 'the supreme heaven upon which all the gods have taken their seats.' The priests are referred to as a class who dress the 'Soma ox,' whatever that may mean, 'for such,' the hymn says, 'are their first duties;' and the gods themselves are said to 'sacrifice with sacrifice, for such are their first duties' also. The hymn, according to the best Hindu commentator, Sanaya, should consist of but 41 stanzas; in which case this 46th verse cannot be genuine. See pp. 112, 185.

One of the most remarkable hymns in the Rig-Veda is the 129th of the 10th Book. I subjoin the translation supplied by Max Müller, which differs materially from that given by Monier Williams:—

'Nor aught, nor naught existed; yon bright sky
Was not, nor heaven's broad woof outstretched above.
What covered all? What sheltered? What concealed?
Was it the water's fathomless abyss?
There was not death, hence was there naught immortal.
There was no confine betwixt day and night.

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The only One breathed breathless in itself;
Other than it there nothing since has been.
Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled
In gloom profound, an ocean without light,—
The germ that still lay covered in the husk
Burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat.
Then first came love upon it, the new spring
Of mind—yea, poets in their hearts discerned,
Pondering, this bond between created things
And uncreated. Comes this spark from earth,
Piercing and all-pervading, or from heaven?
Then seeds were sown, and mighty powers arose—
Nature below, and power and will above:
Who knows the secret? Who proclaimed it here,
Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
The gods themselves came later into being:
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether his will created or was mute,
The most high seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it, or, perchance, e'en he knows not.'[1]

To the exposition of this hymn Max Müller has devoted seven and a half pages of his *History of Sanskrit Literature*. It is a hymn unique among the thousand and seventeen in the collection. There is

[1] Müller's *History*, p. 564, and *Chips*, vol. i. p. 78. See below, p. 220.

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none other like it. Still I think it may be over-valued. I am sceptical as to the writer having had a clear idea of the unity of the deity. I could easily suppose one producing it as a proof that the most thoughtful of the old Rishis not only believed the gods to have had, all of them, a beginning, but that the world originated of itself, self-created; or at any rate, that there was profound ignorance upon the whole subject. But whatever may be the scepticism or the faith of the composer, he seems to have a faint recollection of the Biblical story of the creation, as of a dream which he may have dreamt.

Monier Williams would compare the hymn with the 38th chapter of Job, and perceives in 'it the first dim outline of the remarkable idea that the Creator willed to produce the universe through the agency and co-operation of a female principle, an idea which afterwards acquired more shape in the supposed marriage of Heaven and Earth.' He considers it also 'a good argument for those who maintain that the original faith of the Hindus was monotheistic.' I think it is likely to have helped to originate the character of Brahma (in the neuter), who was imagined as *Nirgun*,[1] without an attribute—neither something nor nothing. It contains, further, I should think, one of the germs from which sprang Pantheism. 'The only One breathed breathless in itself; other than it there nothing since has been.'

[1] See *Dr. Wilson's Life*, by Dr. Geo. Smith, p. 105, 1st Edition.

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The famous 90th hymn of the 10th Book, regarded by many also as favouring monotheism, is said to be a more recent hymn. It has also encouraged the growth of Pantheistic ideas. We refer to the already quoted *Purusha-Sukta*, or *hymn*, in which we have the first supposed reference to the four castes. Of the Purush, God, or man, or both, it is said:—

'He is himself this very universe;
He is whatever is, has been, shall be;
He is the Lord of immortality.'

Yet, singularly enough, in the same hymn, as we have already noticed, as a shadow of the Christian doctrine concerning the sacrifice of 'the only-begotten of the Father,' we have the words,—

'With Purusha, as victim, they performed
A sacrifice. When they divided him,
How did they cut him up?' etc.

In connection with this matter, we refer to another very curious coincidence or shadow of the truth in the deifying of speech, or the 'Word.' Mr. Johnson, the author of *Oriental Religions*, p. 74, remarks: 'The Hindu thinker found deity most near to him, not as a person, nor as visible shape, but as *Word*, the symbol of pure thought.' 'Speech, melodious,' says the Rig-Veda, 'was queen of the gods, generated by them, and divided into many portions.'[1]

As monotheistic in its tone and spirit, we are also referred to the 121st hymn of the 1st Book.

[1] viii. 89, 10; x. 125. Langlois, vol. iv. p. 415.

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Put into metre by Monier Williams,[1] it is more favourable to those who find monotheism in it than in its literal prose translation, which we have given above, p. 91, in introducing this part of the subject :—

"What god shall we adore with sacrifice?
Him let us praise, the golden child that rose
In the beginning, who was born the lord—
The one sole lord of all that is—who made
The earth, and formed the sky, who giveth life,
Who giveth strength, whose bidding gods revere,
Whose hiding-place is immortality,
Whose shadow, death; who by his might is king
Of all the breathing, sleeping, waking world—
Who governs men and beasts, whose majesty
These snowy hills, this ocean with its rivers
Declare; of whom these spreading regions form
The arms; by whom the firmament is strong,
Earth firmly planted, and the highest heavens
Supported, and the clouds that fill the air
Distributed and measured out; to whom
Both earth and heaven, established by his will,
Look up with trembling mind; in whom revealed,
The rising sun shines forth above the world.
Where'er let loose in space, the mighty waters
Have gone, depositing a fruitful seed
And generating fire, there *he* arose,
Who is the breath and life of all the gods,

[1] *Indian Wisdom*, p. 23.

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Whose mighty glance looks round the vast
expanse
Of watery vapour—source of energy,
Cause of the sacrifice—the only God
Above the gods. May he not injure us!
He the Creator of the earth—the righteous
Creator of the sky, Creator too
Of oceans bright, and far extending waters.'

The hymn, even in its bald prose form, is most interesting. Still we are not satisfied that the Rishi who had the honour of composing it was entitled to be regarded as a monotheist. I do not refer to the fact that his successors understood that the interrogative pronoun *who, ka,*—which commenced the question, 'Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?'—was itself a god, and that they worshipped it as the god *Ka.*[1] We refer simply to the fact that the Rishi was clearly in doubt as to who was the god, among the many worshipped around him, and very likely by himself also, who was entitled to the sacrifice as the *facile princeps* among them all. Who 'that golden child, the one born lord of all that is,' was, is also a question difficult, if not impossible, of solution. The opening words bear a remarkable resemblance to the opening words of the Gospel of John. They run: 'In the beginning there arose the golden child; he was the one born lord of all that is. He established this

[1] Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 433. Williams' *Hinduism*, p. 27.

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earth and this sky—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?'

The hymn has, we think, been justly quoted as proving a 'feeling after God,' an anxious and perplexed, yet resolute groping for the light—for him who is found by them who seek after him. 'This yearning after a nameless deity,' says Baron Bunsen concerning this very hymn, 'who nowhere manifests himself in the Indian Pantheon of the Vedas, this voice of humanity groping after God has nowhere found so sublime and touching an expression.' Most unfortunately, we do not discover in their writings that the Rishis were *finders* of the true God. There is a gulf between him, the holy One and the just, and any and every other divinity or divinities, such as cannot be passed over so easily that one does not know whether he has the one or the other. And we have no evidence whatever that the Rishis of old had attained to a knowledge of, and faith in, Him Who is, and beside Whom there is none other. Neither the childishness of the individual or of the nation, nor the imperfection of the language, will prevent the expression of faith in 'our Father in heaven,' the one God.

Before parting altogether from this subject, on which I have already dwelt too long, I would like to say a word on the Relation of the Worshippers to the Gods, and their Faith in them.

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X.

THE RELATION OF THE WORSHIPPERS TO THE GODS, AND THEIR FAITH IN THEM.

IN one word, the relation was very familiar. There is little or no sense of love or fear, no sense of the holy or the pure or the spiritual. They treat the gods as of themselves, only more powerful, subject to the same weaknesses, the same desires, the same appetites. The Soma, the clarified butter, the horses, etc., in which the worshippers delighted, were supposed to be sources of still greater pleasure to their gods. The strength, the stimulus which they themselves experienced, or imagined they experienced, from their drinking of the Soma juice, they supposed their gods to receive in still greater measure. In the 6th hymn Agni is addressed: 'Agni, accept this log, conqueror of horses, thou who lovest songs and delightest in riches. Youngest of the gods, their messenger, most deserving of worship, come at our praise.' But for all this there is no communion of heart with heart, no contact of the spirit of man with the gods whom he worships or whom he feeds. There seems to be no love towards their gods, no rejoicing in communion with them.

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The relation is more that of traders in the bazaar. 'I give this for that; I give sacrifice, you give cows and horses.' There seems to be little or no gratitude or thanks for past favours. It is altogether a bargain for future temporal or spiritual blessings. Canon Rawlinson points out the relation as almost the very opposite to what one would expect—the worshipper being the lord and master, the worshipped being the servant, if not the slave: 'The offerings of praise and sacrifice, and especially the offering of the Soma juice, were considered not merely to please the god, who was the object of them, but to lay him under a binding obligation, and almost to compel him to grant the requests of the worshipper. "The mortal who is strenuous in worship," it is said, "acquires an authority" over the object of his religious regards—an authority which is so complete that he may even sell the god's favour to another person, in order to enable him to attain the object of his desires. "Who buys this—*my* Indra," says Vamadeva, a Vedic poet, "with ten milch kine? When he shall have slain his foes, then let the purchaser give him back to me again;" which the commentator explains as follows: "Vamadeva, *having by much praise got Indra into his possession or subjugation*, proposes to make a bargain when about to dispose of him;" and so he offers for ten milch kine to hand him over temporarily, apparently to any person who will pay the price, with the proviso that when Indra has subdued the person's

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foes, he is to be returned to the vendor!' Wheeler[1] describes the relation as of 'a childlike and filial character; the evils which the worshippers suffered they ascribed to some offence of omission or commission which had been given to a deity; whilst the good which they received was in like manner ascribed to his kindness or favour in return for the sacrifices, prayers, hymns, etc., which they gave to him.' Mr. Wheeler refers to Rig-Veda, i. 83, 2, in proof 'that it is said that the gods, filled with food, are as impatient to enjoy the Soma as bridegrooms long for their brides.' In another hymn in praise of Vishnu, 'men worship him, offering him their libation face to face.' 'The worshipper offers his Varuna honey, sweet things which the god is sure to like, and then appeals to him. "Now be good, and let us speak together again."' 'Let us speak together again, because my honey has been brought. Thou eatest what thou likest like a priest.'

We do not read much of *Faith* in the Rig-Veda. Still it is referred to; and it is associated with its opposite *Scepticism*. You have such texts connected with Indra, in whom faith began to wane even in Vedic times. 'The sun, moon, and Indra perform their revolutions, that we may see and have *faith* in what we see.' 'Excite in us, Indra, veneration for

[1] Talboys Wheeler's *History of India*, vol. i. pp. 13–16. R.-V., i. 83, 3; x. 1, 3. Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 535–537. Wilson, vol. i. p. xxxvii. R.-V., iv. 15, 5; iv. 24, 10. Wilson, vol. iii. p. 170, note 2.

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the sun, for the waters, and for those who are worthy of the praise of living beings, as exempt from sin; injure not our nearest kin, for our *trust* is in thy mighty power.' 'When Indra hurls his fatal shaft, every one immediately has *faith* in the resplendent Indra.'

In spite of these reasons for faith in Indra, we read: 'Offer praise to Indra, if you desire booty; true praise, *if he truly exists.* One and the other says, There is no Indra. Who has seen him? Whom shall we praise?' Indra himself is represented as answering, Here I am, O worshipper; behold me here. In might I overcome all creatures. In another hymn we find the same scepticism manifesting itself: 'The terrible one, of whom they ask where he is, and of whom they say that he is not; he takes away the riches of his enemy, like the stakes at a game. Believe in him, ye men, for he is indeed Indra.' In another text scepticism and indifferentism are associated with the race for riches and wine-drinking: 'Thou Indra never findest a rich man to be thy friend. Wine-swillers despise thee. But when thou thunderest, when thou gatherest the clouds, then thou art called like a father.'[1]

The most pronounced scepticism is found in a hymn in which gods and Brahmans alike are turned into ridicule. The deities to whom the hymn is

[1] i. 102; i. 104; i. 55, 5; viii. 2; ii. 12, 5; viii. 21, 14. Müller's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 302. *Chips*, vol. i. p. 42.

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professedly dedicated are frogs. It is, in form, a panegyric of the frogs, while it is really, as Max Müller says, 'a satire on the priests.' It commences: 'When lying prostrate for a year, like Brahmans performing a vow, the frogs have emitted their voice, roused by the showers of heaven. When the heavenly waters fell upon them as upon a dry fish lying in a pond, the music of the frogs comes together like the lowing of cows with their calves. When, at the approach of the rainy season, the rain has wetted them, as they were longing and thirsting, one goes to the other while he talks, like a son to his father, saying, *akkhala.*' (Greek, *Brekekex koaxkoax.*)[1]

Almost equally literal is Dr. Muir's versified translation, which proceeds thus:—

'Afar is heard their merry croak.
Well drenched, they jump aloft in glee,
And join in noisy colloquy.
They leap upon each other's backs,
And each to t'other cries ko-ax.
As teachers first call out a word,
Then boys repeat what they have heard,
Just so the frogs croak out once more
What other frogs had croaked before.
Sounds diverse issue from their throats,
Some low like cows, some bleat like goats,
Though one in name, of various sheen,
For one is brown, another green.

[1] Müller's *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 494.

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As Brahmans at a Soma-rite,
Around the bowl in talk unite,
This day the frogs their pond surround,
And make the air with noise resound.
These priests, the frogs, their voices raise,
And sing their annual hymn of praise.
As priests who sweated o'er a pot,
Soon quit the fire they find too hot,
The frogs, so long oppressed with heat,
Emerge in haste from their retreat.'[1]

I give the concluding verse from Wilson's translation. It is in the usual form of a prayer for riches and cows: 'May the cow-toned, the goat-toned, the speckled, the green (frog, severally), grant us riches. May the frogs in the fertilizing (season of the rains), bestowing upon us hundreds of cows, prolong our lives.'[2] In a note in MS. to the edition of Müller's *History* before me, I read: 'If this was meant for a satire, the age must have been degenerate indeed, which could include this in a *Sanhita* of sacred hymns.' I add, if this was not intended for satire, the age was fallen, if possible, still lower. Which is worse, to have ridiculed gods and priests, their hymns and their rites, or to have worshipped frogs as gods, and to have expected from them riches, cows, and long life? Either view implies a low state of religious feeling and of faith. The worship of the

[1] Muir's *Metrical Translations*, p. 194.
[2] vii. 103. Wilson's *Translation*, vol. iv. p. 204.

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sacrificial post and the hymn (iii. 8) addressed to it, are almost equally ridiculous. (See Wilson, vol. iii. p. 4.)

Dr. Banerjea connects the modern Hindu doctrine of faith, as opposed to that of ceremonial works, with the worship of Vishnu, Siva (the *Rudra* of the Rig-Veda) or *Sakti;* and more particularly with that of the first under the names of Krishna and Hari; and also makes it to be an exotic, not a true Indo-Aryan plant. Though the subject is to a missionary most interesting, it is scarcely within my scope.

In the Mahabharata[1] it is recorded that Narada, the son of Brahma, addressed the incarnate Narayana (a name given by the Hindus to Krishna, and by some Bengali Christians to Christ, as meaning the *Refuge of men*)—'We do not know what god or father *you* worship.' Narayana tells Narada to contemplate the supreme spirit as the *one* object of meditation. Narada, under divine direction, 'goes to the mount Meru for a vision of that supreme spirit.' Looking to the north-west of that mountain, he obtained that wonderful vision. To the north of the Ocean of Milk, at a distance, as poets make out, of more than 456,000 miles from Meru (Merv ?), there was a large continent by the name of '*White.*' There lived white people without sensuousness, . . . freed from all sin, etc. In the following chapter, Narayana is repre-

[1] Mahabharata, Santiparva, chapters 336, 337, 338. Dr. Banerjea's *Aryan Witness*, pp. 230-235.

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sented as saying—'You, full of devotion, desire to know where you may get a sight of the Lord. North of the Ocean of Milk is a continent called *White*. The men of that place, resplendent as the moon, are votaries of Narayana (lit. the Refuge of men). Single-minded, they are devoted to the most excellent Purusha. Those men, inhabitants of the white continent, are called Ekantins (monotheists). Go there, ye Rishis; there is our spirit manifested.' This 'excellent Purusha,' it turns out, is none other than Krishna. Narada accordingly went, it is supposed, to Meru, and had the vision.

Again, in the Bhagavat Purana, written about the twelfth century A.D., Narada is represented as informing its distinguished author that he had almost ignored the unspotted glory of the Lord, and that the Darsana or Philosophy, which was not grateful to him, counted for nothing. 'You have not,' he added, 'celebrated the glory of the son of Vasudeva (*i.e.* Krishna) in the same manner as you have described Dharma or Ritualistic ceremonies.' This text, Dr. Banerjea truly contends, proves conclusively that down to the time this was written, the glory of Krishna, the son of Vasudeva, had not been duly celebrated, nor the doctrine of faith as opposed to ceremonial observances introduced. Narada, who had received the vision of the supreme God in the fair land of the whites at a great distance, north-west of Mount Meru, warns the founder of the Vedanta School and the author of the

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Brahma-Sutras, of the futility of philosophical speculations, which are not grateful to the Lord, the Saviour of the world. He moves him to recount his acts; this accordingly he did in the Bhagavat or Krishna's Purana.

Again, in another work of great authority, written about 800 A.D. and called Narada Pancharatra, the writer is introduced telling his son Suka-Deva that Narada was on one occasion practising some austerities, when suddenly he heard a voice from heaven:—

'If Hari (Krishna) is worshipped, what is the use of austerities? If Hari is not worshipped, what is the use of austerities? If Hari is within and without, what is the use of austerities? If Hari is not within and without, what is the use of austerities? Stop, stop, O Brahman! Why do you engage in austerities? Go, O Brahman! do go quickly to Siva, the ocean of knowledge. Get, O get matured faith in Hari, as described by the guild of Vishnu, the splitter and snapper of the fetters of the world.'

From these texts we see that this modern doctrine of *faith* was foreign, and was received from the fair-complexioned living to the north-west of Meru. Narada had got it there, in the form of a vision of Vishnu. He persuaded the author of the Krishna Purana to recount the Lord's acts. This he did in the said work.

Then, as a further step, we have a voice from heaven telling Narada to give up all ceremonial works

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for this faith in Hari—*the taker away of sins.* The whole of this was written not earlier than 800 A.D. If so, the whole was very likely founded on the Christian doctrine of *faith,* as preached by the Christian *Ekantins* or monotheists.

It will be observed that the part of the story found in the Mahabharata goes only to prove that this *faith,* the *Krishna-cultus,* did not originate at the time. On the other hand, its origin cannot be traced further back than the Narada Pancharatra and the Bhagavat Purana, written not earlier than 800 A.D. Thus Dr. Banerjea's texts seem certainly to go towards proving that the doctrine is an exotic, and that it was not fully developed until a comparatively recent period.

We need greater light on this acknowledgment which the Vaishnava Shastras seem to make of 'light from Christian sources in brightening the colour imparted to their personation of Krishna as some compensation for the dark hue of his *Braja-lila.*'[1]

[1] The Mahabharata gives, in the story of Narada's visit to Meru (Merv), and his vision of the White Continent, the land of Ekantins, a clue to the real origin of the Vaishnava dogmas. That story, coupled with Narada's having suggested the worship of Krishna, and the voice from heaven which he had heard,—all these amount to a strong presumption that the doctrine of Krishna is an imitation of Christian teaching. The premises on which the presumption relies are contained in the authorized and acknowledged Scriptures of the Vaishnavas themselves. The original introducers of the doctrine must have construed the sensualities of Krishna in a mystic sense, and they were only too glad to accept Narada's importations—though the Vaishnavas, as a body, may not confess to all this.

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XI.

INCARNATION, MEDIATION, AND AGNI.

THOUGH the doctrine of Incarnation is not formally found in the Rig-Veda, Vishnu, who is in later Hindu writings so closely connected with *Avatars* or incarnations, is there, and is remarkable, not for being among the first three, which he is not, but for having strid across the seven regions of the universe in three steps, and enveloping all things with the dust of his beams. In this we have a very pronounced anthropomorphic representation of the divine. We meet with many instances of men becoming gods, but no god is, in so many words, said to have become human, though most of the gods are represented as human in the worst,[1] as well as in the best sense. Purusha and Prajapati's sacrifice of himself or themselves, in which undoubted reference is made to the body, is the most remarkable instance in point.[2] We have a very interesting confirmation of this in relics preserved of the old Aryan religion by the Teutonic branch of the family. In one of the old Rune songs, Odin, the chief deity of the Teutons, is

[1] Wilson's Rig-Veda, vol. iv. p. 243. [2] See above, pp. 43, 44, 83–90.

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represented as hanging during nine long nights in the wind-rocked tree, 'with a spear wounded, offering himself to himself.' Karl Blind, to whose article on the *Odinic Songs in Shetland*[1] we are indebted for our information, adds: 'Odin, the representative of thought, seems to be God and man at one and the same time; he offers "himself to himself." He is the fruit of a tree the origin of which none can fathom.' The words of the *Rune, Rick*, or hymn, in which Odin speaks to himself, are sufficiently curious and illustrative of the Vedic religion to justify us in giving them here:—

1. I wot that I hung on the wind-rocked tree
   Nine long nights,
   With a spear wounded,
   And to Odin offered
   Myself to myself—
   On that tree of which none knows
   From what root it springs.
2. Bread no one gave me, nor a horn of mead.
   Netherward I peered.
   On Runes intent, I learned them sighing—
   Then fell down thence. . . .
3. Then I began to thrive, and began to think.
   I grew, and gained in strength.
   Word by word rose to me from the Word;
   Deed after deed rose to me from the deed.[2]

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, June 1879, p. 1092.

[2] Observe the alliteration, in which the original abounds, reproduced by the translator.

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The Shetland Odinic song, lately discovered, is on the same idea:—

'Nine days he hung on the rootless tree;
For bad was the folk, and good was he.
A bloody mark was in his side—
Made with a lance—that would not *hide* [skin].
Nine long nights, in the nipping rime,
Hung he there with his naked limb.'

This incarnation of the Divine is seen largely in the character given to Agni, the god who is specially praised for his abiding with men, so as to become one of them. This trait of his is a prominent one throughout the hymns, and is closely allied to his mediatorial character. As there are few doctrines in the Christian religion more persistently objected to by the Hindu than the doctrine of Mediation, I shall cull largely from Dr. Muir's texts[1] to show how this feature is pictured in the old Rig-Veda hymns. Many object to the doctrine of mediation more than to that of incarnation, which is so closely allied to it. The doctrine of incarnation is well known as a modern Hindu doctrine, but that of mediation is not so much so. Still, the latter is very pronouncedly found in the character of Agni, 'the youngest of the gods, their messenger;' who 'goes wisely between these two creations (heaven and earth, gods and men) like a friendly messenger between two hamlets.'[2] On the

[1] *Oriental Studies*, pp. 67-74.
[2] Müller's *Chips*, vol. i. p. 34. R.-V., ii. 6, 7.

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strength of hymn iv. 1, 5, Max Müller[1] expressly calls him 'the messenger and mediator between god and men.' He is spoken of in various hymns[2] as enjoying perpetual youth, travelling in a red-horsed car, an immortal who has taken up his abode among mortals as their guest, and as the domestic priest, appointed both by men and gods. He is described as a sage, the divinest among sages, who enables men to serve the gods in a correct and acceptable manner, in cases where this would be beyond their unaided skill. He is spoken of as the outward sign or manifestation and the end of the sacrifice. It is said of him that his father begot him to be the revelation, and a brilliant banner of all sacrifices. He is also the religious leader or priest of the gods, a swift messenger moving between heaven and earth, appointed both by gods and by men, to maintain their mutual communications, to announce to the gods the hymns, and to convey to them the oblations of their worshippers. Being acquainted with the innermost recesses of the sky (iv.

[1] *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 462.

[2] i. 44, 6; i. 58, 1; i. 36, 15; iv. 5; i. 44, 4; i. 58, 6; ii. 4, 1; i. 1, 1, 3, 8; i. 12, 1; i. 94, 6; ii. 1, 2; ii. 5, 2, 3; iii. 3, 4; i. 1, 4; i. 31, 1; x. 2, 3-5; iii. 33, 4; iii. 10, 4; iii. 11, 2; iv. 3, 1; vi. 2-3; x. 20, 9; x. 110, 11; x. 150, 4; i. 12, 1, 2, 4, 8; i. 27, 45; i. 36, 3, 4, 5; i. 44, 2, 3, 5, 9, 12; i. 58, 1; i. 74, 4, 7; i. 188, 1; ii. 6, 6; iii. 4, 11; vii. 11, 1; x. 70, 2; vii. 11, 1; vii. 11, 3; viii. 91, 16; x. 7, 6; ii. 1, 13, 14; x. 51, 52; i. 12, 2, 6; i. 26, 7; i. 36, 5; i. 31, 11; i. 96, 4; i. 1, 8; i. 60, 4; v. 8, 2; viii. 15, 2; i. 26, 3; i. 31, 10, 14, 16; i. 75, 4; ii. 1, 9; vi. 1, 5; iii. 15, 1; vii. 13, 1; vii. 15, 10; viii. 13, 3; viii. 43, 26; iii. 2, 2; iii. 25, 1; x. 12, 7; ii. 12, 3; i. 60, 1; i. 93, 6; vi. 7, 1; viii. 91, 17; i. 59, 2.

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8, 2, 4), he is well fitted to summon the gods to the sacrifices; and he himself comes to them seated on the same car, or in advance of them. Without him the gods experience no satisfaction. He offers them worship. He is the mouth and tongue through which both gods and men taste the sacrifice. The other gods plead with him to convey to them the sacrifice. On the promise of long life and a share in the sacrifice, he agrees, declaring himself ready to obey the commands of the gods. He is the Lord Protector and Leader of the people, the Lord of the house, dwelling in every abode; he is kinsman and friend as well as father and brother. He drives away and destroys Rakshasas and demons.

Sometimes a divine origin is ascribed to him, while at other times his production, or at least his manifestation, is described as earthly, and through human appliances. He is said to have been the son of Heaven and Earth, and to have come down from the sky, where he was generated by Indra. Elsewhere he is said to have been generated by the gods as a light to the Aryans, and placed by the gods among the tribes of Manu, that is, of men, for their benefit.[1]

In some parts he is spoken of as having a three-

[1] i. 36, 10; ii. 4, 3; vi. 16, 1; viii. 73, 2; v. 4, 8; iii. 36, 7; viii. 39, 8; i. 149, 4; ii. 9, 3; viii. 39, 8; vii. 6, 1; iii. 6, 5; i. 96, 4; vi. 5, 6; vii. 7, 7; vi. 8, 2; x. 156, 4; x. 88, 4; i. 59, 1, 2, 5; vi. 7, 1; iii. 3, 10; vii. 6, 2; ii. 8, 3; ii. 9, 1; viii. 5, 4; i. 188, 1; x. 187, 4; i. 70, 2, 6; iii. 4, 11; viii. 39, 6; vi. 2, 4, 5; vi. 5, 5; vi. 10, 3. See the fearful picture of Agni below, p. 200.

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fold existence at one and the same time, in heaven, in the air, and on the earth; while elsewhere he is said to have only two, an upper and a lower sphere. The highest divine functions are ascribed to him. He is called the divine king, strong as Indra; he is said to have stretched out the heavens and the earth, though, as we have seen above, their son; to have produced them; to have measured out the mundane regions and the luminaries of heaven; to have caused the sun, the imperishable orb, to ascend the sky; to have made all that flies or walks or stands or moves. He is the head or summit of the sky, the centre of the earth, and his greatness exceeds that of heaven and all the worlds. He achieved famous exploits of old; men tremble at his mighty deeds, and his ordinances cannot be resisted. Earth and heaven obey his commands. He is the conqueror of thousands, sees all worlds, knows the races of gods and men, and the secrets of mortals. His followers prosper; he is the friend of the man who entertains him as a guest, and bestows protection and wealth on the worshipper who sweats to bring him fuel, or wearies his head to serve him. He watches with a thousand eyes over the man who brings him food and oblations. He also confers, and is the guardian lord of immortality. He was made by the gods the centre of immortality. He carries men across calamities or preserves them from them. All treasures are congregated in him. All blessings proceed from

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him as branches from a tree. He is master of all the treasures in the earth, the atmosphere, and the sky. He is in consequence continually supplicated for various boons, such as to forgive sin, to avert Varuna's wrath, and to release from (his ?) bond.[1]

The simplicity with which he is addressed once or twice is suggestive of Martin Elginbrodde's prayer, as quoted above; as in viii. 44, 23—'If I were thou,' says the worshipper naively to Agni, 'and thou wert I, thy aspirations should be fulfilled;' and again (viii. 19, 256)—'If, O Agni, thou wert a mortal and I an immortal, I would not abandon thee to wrong or to penury; *my* worshipper should not be poor, nor distressed, nor miserable.' Another worshipper addresses him, 'Why hast *thou*, among all the gods, forsaken and injured us? I ask thee in my ignorance.' After the manner of orientals, in addressing him, all attributes are given to him. 'The extravagance of oriental adulation,' remarks Talboys Wheeler while writing of Agni, 'will permit an Asiatic courtier to address some petty chief or Raja as the king of kings, but this by no means implies an idea of universal empire' (vol. i. p. 20). Hence we read that all gods are comprehended in him. He surrounds them as the tire of the wheel its spokes. But Agni

[1] iv. 4, 10; x. 79, 5; i. 31, 7; vi. 7, 4, 7; vii. 4, 6; iii. 17, 4; iii. 20, 4; v. 4, 9; vii. 12, 2; x. 6, 6; vi. 13, 1; vii. 6, 7; x. 91, 3; iv. 2, 4, 18, 9; i. 36, 14, 16; i. 58, 8, 9; iv. 12, 4; vi. 93, 7; iv. 1, 4, 5; v. 2, 7; x. 79, 6; v. 3, 1; i. 141, 9; v. 13, 6; vi. 59, 2; vii. 93, 6; viii. 38, 4, 7, 9; vii. 5, 6; viii. 92, 1; vii. 6, 3.

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is particularly associated with Indra as his twin brother, drinkers together of the same Soma juice. He is also, unlike the fire or the sun, rather partial in dispensing his gifts—driving away the Dasyas from the house, thus creating a large light for the Aryans, as the promoter of the Aryans, and as the vanquisher of the irreligious Panis. Such are the leading attributes and deeds ascribed to Agni in the hymns of the Rig-Veda.

Professor Whitney describes him at full length, as the chief of the earthly divinities of the Rig-Veda, accounts for his origin by remarking that there was only one terrestrial, as distinguished from celestial or atmospheric phenomena, namely fire, calculated to give rise to so distinct a conception of something divine as to appear as a fully developed divinity among the Indo-Aryans. 'Agni, the god of fire,' he remarks, 'is one of the most prominent in the whole Pantheon. His hymns are more numerous than those of any other god. Astonishment and admiration at the properties of this element as the most wonderful and mysterious[1] of all with which man comes into daily and familiar contact, and exultation

[1] 'The bonnie, bonnie bairn, who sits poking in the ase,
Glowering in the fire wi' his wee round face;
Laughing at the fuffin' lowe, what sees he there?
Ha, the young dreamer's bigging castles in the air.
Glowering at the imps wi' their castles in the air.'

This is said of a little boy in one of the most popular ditties of the 19th century. It seems to have been literally and seriously true of grown-up men and women in India three thousand years ago.

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over its reduction to the service and partial control of mankind, are abundantly expressed in the manner in which he is addressed. He is praised as an immortal among mortals, a divinity upon earth; his nobleness and condescension, that he, a god, deigns to sit in the very dwellings of men, are extolled. The other gods have established him here as high priest and mediator for the human race; he was the first who made sacrifice, and taught men to have recourse above. He is messenger between heaven and earth; he, on the one hand, bears aloft the prayers and offerings, and secures their gaining in return the blessings demanded; and, on the other hand, brings the gods themselves to the altars of their worshipper, and puts them in possession there of the gifts presented to them. When the sun is down and the daylight gone, Agni is the only divinity left on earth to protect mortals till the following dawn; his beams then shine abroad, and dispel the demons of darkness, the *Rakshasas*, whose peculiar enemy and destroyer he is. These attributes and offices form the staple theme of his songs, amplified and varied without limit, and coupled with general ascriptions of praise, and prayers for blessings to be directly bestowed by him or granted through his intercession. Among his frequent appellations are, "belonging to all men," "bearer of the offering," "all possessing," "purifier," and "demon-slayer." He is styled son of the lightning or of the sun, as sometimes kindled by

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them; but, as in all primitive nations, the ordinary mode of his production is by the friction of two dry billets of wood. And this birth of his, as a wonder and mystery unparalleled, is painted in the hymns in dark and highly figurative language: ten fingers of the kindler are ten virgins who bring him to birth; the two bits of wood are his mothers; once born he grows up rapidly in their lap, as they lie there prostrate upon the earth; he turns upon them, but not for milk—he devours them; the arms of the kindler fear him, and lift themselves above them in wonder.'[1]

Monier Williams versifies the texts on Agni:—

Agni, thou art a sage, a priest, a king,
Protector, father of the sacrifice;
Commissioned by us men, thou dost ascend.
A messenger, conveying to the sky
Our hymns and offerings. Though thy origin
Be threefold, now from air, and now from water,
Now from the mystic double Arani,
Thou art thyself a mighty god, a lord,
Giver of life and immortality,
One in thy essence, but to mortals three,
Displaying thine eternal triple form,
As fire on earth, as lightning in the air,
As sun in heaven. Thou art a cherished guest
In every household—father, brother, son,
Friend, benefactor, guardian, all in one.
Bright, seven-rayed god! How manifold thy shapes

[1] Whitney's *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, pp. 22, 33.

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Revealed to us by votaries! Now we see thee,
With body all of gold, and radiant hair,
Flaming from three terrific heads, and mouths
Whose burning jaws and teeth devour all things;
Now with a thousand glowing horns; and now
Flashing thy lustre from a thousand eyes.
Thou'rt borne towards us in a golden chariot,
Impelled by winds, and drawn by ruddy steeds,
Marking thy car's destructive course with blackness.
Deliver, mighty lord, thy worshippers.
Purge us from taint of sin; and when we die,
Deal mercifully with us on the pyre,
Burning our bodies with their load of guilt,
But bearing our eternal part on high
To luminous bodies and realms of bliss,
For ever there to dwell with righteous men.'[1]

In this character of Agni, I think the missionary can discover many things which he may use to advantage, by way of comparison and of contrast, in commending him who is 'The Light of the World,' and 'The Sun of Righteousness,' 'Him who was given for a light to the Gentiles, and glory of the people of Israel.'

[1] Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 18.

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XII.

WOMEN, POLYGAMY, AND POLYANDRY.

IN Vedic times we have every reason to believe that our Aryan forefathers generally practised monogamy, or marriage in its true primal conception and intention, as instituted in Paradise, as the permanent union of one woman to one man. In one of the hymns the inseparable duality of two of the Aryan gods is set forth under the comparison of 'pairs that usually run in couples,' such as 'husband and wife.' In another hymn, husbands and wives, as married pairs or couples, are described as uniting in worship and presenting their sacrifices together. 'Married couples desirous of thy protection, to obtain herds of cows, importune thee with prayers, O Indra, because thou joinest together two persons desirous of bovine wealth and seeking to go to heaven.' 'They anoint thee (Agni), like a welcome friend, with milk and butter, when thou makest husband and wife of one mind.'[1] Indeed, the original normal Vedic idea of religious worship appears to have been that it should be performed by a married couple, the

[1] i. 131, 3; v. 3, 2.

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husband being the officiating priest and his wife assisting.

The normal household had one husband and one wife on a level of equality, at the hearth, which was the altar of sacrifice. The wife had charge of the sacred vessels, prepared the sacrifice and even sometimes composed the hymn, as we shall presently see. Marriage is likened to 'the embrace of Indra by the hymn.' 'The sun follows the dawn as a man a woman;' and the dawn, itself deified, is likened to a 'radiant bride.' The piety and happiness of a married couple is well described in hymn viii. 31, 5–9. We quote also the following:—'As a loving wife shows herself to her husband, so does she [the dawn], smiling, reveal her form; moving forth to arouse all creatures to their labours.' 'A man's wife is his dwelling, verily she is his place of birth.' 'All life, all breath is in thee, O Dawn, as thou ascendest. Rise, daughter of heaven, with blessings.'[1]

Raka, the full moon, is prayed to in the words, 'May she [Raka] sew her work with an infallible needle, or with a needle that is not capable of being cut or broken,' with one of which the stitches will endure; in like manner as clothes, as explained by the learned Sanskrit commentator, wrought with a needle last a long time. As goddess of parturition,

[1] Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 28; Wilson's R.-V., vol. ii. pp. xi. and 288; ii. 39, 2; iv. 53, 4; i. 1, 23; x. 43, 1; i. 48, 92; ii. 10, 4; viii. 31, 5-9.

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this same Raka is represented as sewing the umbilical cord.

There is a rather remarkable mantra in the 142d hymn, indicative of the influence of woman as a mediator, the position which Roman Catholics are so fond of giving to Mary the mother of Jesus. The verse to which I refer runs: 'May pure Bharati, established as the invoker between the gods and the mortals, and also Ila, and the great Sarasvati—the three adorable goddesses—sit on the *kusi* grass.'[1] The mode in which female influence was exerted seems to be indicated in a hymn to Ushas, who is addressed—'Proudly manifesting thy person like a young damsel, thou comest, O goddess, to the man who worships the gods. Smiling beautifully like a young woman, thou, bright Ushas, dost exhibit thy breasts.' 'This is the altar which we have decorated for thee, as a wife attached to her husband puts on elegant garments to gratify him.' And again—'Ushas is smilingly exhibiting her beauty as a well-dressed loving wife before her husband.' 'As maidens decorating themselves with unguents to go to the bridegroom.' 'The wife of Purukutsa propitiated you two, Indra and Varuna, with oblations and prostrations, and therefore you gave her [as a son] the king Trasadasyu, the slayer of foes, dwelling near the gods.'

As we have said, at least one of the hymns was

[1] i. 142, 9—*Vadarthayatna.*

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actually composed by a woman of the name of Viswavara, of the family of Atri. She was not only a Rishi, the composer of Ricks, but also a priestess, discharging the priestly office, worshipping the gods at dawn with hymns and oblations. Her hymn commences: 'Agni, when kindled, spreads lustre through the firmament, and shines widely in the presence of the dawn. Viswavara, facing the east, glorifying the gods with praises, and bearing the ladle with the oblation, proceeds to the sacred fire.' The third verse contains a very appropriate prayer from a wife: 'Preserve in concord the relation of man and wife.'[1]

Still, though monogamy seems to have been the normal state of matters, there are to be found, without any accompanying note of reprobation or disapproval, traces of *Polygamy*.[2] There is allusion to 'the husband of many maidens,' with approbation. In one hymn the Aswins are praised: 'You stripped off from the aged Chyavana his entire skin, as if it had been a coat of mail; you reversed the life of the sage who was without kindred, and constituted him the husband of many maidens.' The same idea seems to underlie the words addressed to Indra: 'Powerful Indra, the minds [of the pious and wise] adhere to thee as affectionate wives to a loving husband.' The collective divinities (Visvadevas) are

[1] i. 124, 10; iv. 3, 2; i. 124, 7; v. 28, 1-3.
[2] i. 62, 11; i. 71, 1; i. 105, 8; vii. 26, 3.

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addressed by a Rishi in misery: 'The ribs of the well close round me, like the rival wives (of one husband); cares consume me, although thy worshipper, as a rat gnaws a weaver's threads.' There are certain hymns addressed to the Dawn, which the Rig-Vidhana directs the worshipper to repeat, as by so doing he will obtain, among other things, 'male offspring and wives,' an expression suggestive of polygamy. The 75th hymn of the 7th Book is one of these hymns. One Rishi exclaims, 'The magnificent lord, the protector of the virtuous, . . . has given me five hundred wives.' The following verse addressed to Indra is suggestive of a recognised and permitted cruelty to wives as well as of polygamy—more especially when we consider the feelings with which Dasyas, Asuras, and Rakshasas were regarded, as we shall see below:—'May Indra, equal to the task, and unaided, possess all the cities (of the Asuras) as a husband his wives.'[1] He is also addressed: 'Thou dwellest with thy glories like a Raja with his wives.' 'Praising the liberality of Sudas, the donor of two hundred cows, and two chariots with two wives.' The gods are generally represented with only one wife each, but there are expressions of doubtful interpretation, such as 'Agni and Sarasvati with the Sarasvatas: may the three goddesses sit down before us upon this sacred grass.' It is difficult to understand what Agni has to do here among the

[1] i. 116, 10; i. 62, 11; i. 105, 8; viii. 19, 36; vii. 26, 3.

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goddesses. The expression 'wives of the gods' occurs pretty often, though in some cases human wives would be more in keeping with the context. 'May Swashtri with the wives of the gods be with us for our happiness, and hear us at this solemnity.' 'May the pious couple (the Yajamana and his wife) conjointly appreciate the beauty of the sacrifice.' The same couple are referred to in the words, 'The pious pair, like two riders in a chariot, follow the path of the ceremony.'[1] Ushas (Dawn) and Night are represented[2] as 'manifesting themselves variously and going to promote the first invocation, like two wives,' I suppose, of one man.

Kakshivat, the reputed author of the above, and of as many as ten other hymns[3] of the same 1st Book, was the grandson of a slave. Having finished his studies, and taken leave of his preceptor, he was journeying homeward, when night came on, and he fell asleep by the road-side. Early in the morning a Raja, attended by his retinue, came to the spot, and disturbed the Brahmin's slumbers. On his starting up the Raja accosted him with great cordiality, and, being very favourably impressed by him, inquired as to his rank and birth, and finding them satisfactory, brought him home with him, and married him to his ten daughters. At the same time he presented him

[1] vi. 18, 2; vii. 18, 22; vii. 2, 8; vii. 34, 20; 35, 6; vii. 42, 1; vii. 39, 1.

[2] i. 122, 2.

[3] i. 116–126.

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with 100 nishkas of gold, 100 horses, 100 bulls, 1060 cows, and 11 chariots, one for each of his wives, and one for himself, each drawn by four horses. Such is the story told in Dwiveda's *Niti-manjari*, and cited in Sayana's commentary on hymn i. 125, which professes to have been recited in acknowledgment of the Raja's liberality. It contains the following mantra:—'From which generous prince soliciting my acceptance, I, Kakshivat, unhesitatingly accepted 100 nishkas, 100 vigorous steeds, and 100 bulls, whereby he has spread his imperishable fame through heaven. Ten chariots drawn by bay steeds, and carrying my wives, stood near me, given by Swanya; and 1060 cows followed. Forty bay horses harnessed to the chariots lead the procession in front of 1000 followers.' The story, if true, and truly interpreted, proves not only that polygamy existed, but also that marriages were celebrated between Brahmins and Kshatriyas.

But not only was polygamy tolerated, it would appear that polyandry, a still more disgusting crime (yet prevalent among some of the aboriginal tribes of India, alike in the north and in the south), was also acknowledged among the Indo-Aryans. We read[1] of a chariot race, at which the renowned Aswins gained a damsel as their joint or common property. This we would fain believe was, however, quite exceptional.

[1] i. 119, 5.

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A very remarkable case of polyandry insisted on by Siva is given in the Mahabharata, where Draupadi is given to be the common wife of five men. The story runs: In a former life Draupadi had performed severe penance in order to get a husband. Siva was pleased, and appeared to her, and promised her five husbands. She answered that she had asked for only one. The god replied, 'Five times you said to me, "Grant me a husband," therefore you shall have five husbands.'[1] There is, apparently, older authority for the vile practice than either Siva or Draupadi. In hymn i. 167, we read in praise of the Maruts: 'Maruts, with whom their consort Rodasi is united, perfect, rich in milky rain-water and of golden colour, like a spear at hand; Rodasi, united like the youthful wife of a man walking in secret, and like the sacrificial praise [hymn], delighting in company. The resplendent and impetuous Maruts united with the youthful Rodasi as with one[2] common to many. The dreadful Maruts were not rejected by Rodasi; they, the brilliant ones, became fond of the delightful Rodasi for her friendship. When the divine Rodasi of dishevelled hair, and filled with passion for the Maruts, accepted these Maruts for union, she of the bright face mounted the chariot of the admiring troop of Maruts, even as bright-faced Surya mounted that

[1] Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 387.

[2] Wilson translates 'a public or common woman,' and adds, 'The allusion is not without interest, as indicative of manners.' The translation given in the text is from the *Vedarthayatna*.

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of the Aswins.' Wilson adds in a footnote: 'Rodasi is said to signify the lightning or the bride of the Maruts;' and Surya, or rather Suryeva, the wife or daughter of Surya. Sanyana understands Rodasi as 'the wife of the Maruts.' If so, then there is here an undoubted sanction of polyandry.

That woman was not always held in very high respect is clear from various passages, as, for example, the highest praise which the Rishi Syavaswa could give to a queen, his greatest benefactor, who had not only treated him with reverence, but had given him a herd of cattle and costly ornaments, and put him in the way of obtaining the woman on whom he had set his heart, is—'Sasiyasi, though a female, is more excellent than a man who reverences not the gods nor bestows wealth,' on the principle that a living dog is better than a dead lion.[1] Verse 3 is even more disrespectful, but is unquotable. The same thing is very clear from the absence of all prayers for daughters. Indeed, daughters are conspicuous in the Rig-Veda by their absence. We meet in every other hymn with prayers for sons and grandsons, male offspring, male descendants, and male issue, and occasionally for wives, but never for daughters. Even forgiveness is asked, as in iv. 12, 5, for 'our

[1] R.-V., v. 61, 6. Wilson, iii. pp. 344, 345. R. C. Ghose, p. 51. Nidana-Sutra, iii. 8. Satapatha Brahmana, iii. 2, 1, 40; ii. 5, 2, 20.

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sons and grandsons, the reward of what has been well done;' but no blessing is ever prayed for, for a daughter. Indra is called 'the showerer of benefits, the giver of wives;' but no god is ever complimented on giving daughters. Indra is spoken of also as glorified like a man boasting of his wife, but no one is ever spoken of as boasting of a daughter. But a Rishi does compare himself, in his misery praying to his god, 'to humble females begging for food.' When Agni is born, it is 'as if it was a male infant,' that is, they clap their hands and make sounds of rejoicing like the parents of a new-born son. There were no such rejoicings over the birth of a daughter.

Special praise is given to some gods (or Aswins) for 'having got a husband for one Ghosha [a leper] who was growing old, and tarrying in her father's dwelling.' Something like an elopement is the subject of praise to the same gods —'They who gave a bride to the youthful Vimada, and bore her away in their car, outstripping the rival host.'

Hell (*pada*) is said to have been 'produced for those who, being wicked, false, untrue, go about like women without brothers, like females hostile to their husbands.' (iv. 5, 5.)

That husbands did not live always very faithful to their wives seems to have been fully acknowledged. Ushas, the Dawn, is addressed: 'Thou, Ushas, hast been beheld like a wife repairing to

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an inconstant husband, and not like one deserting him.'[1]

Sin against chastity was not, apparently, uncommon. 'Weber advances some astounding proofs of the little confidence entertained in ancient times by the Indo-Aryans in the chastity of their women.' There are references to conjugal infidelity, to common women, and to secret births, of all of which there seemed to have been no shame. In the Satapatha Brahmana of the Yajur-Veda, it is stated that the wife of the person offering *praghasa* to Varuna must have one or more paramours, a doctrine which has led to the frightful immoralities openly associated with the Hindu temples of modern times, specially in Southern India;[2] and which has led Monier Williams to conclude his Introduction to his *Indian Wisdom* with the words: 'In conclusion, let me note one other point which, of itself, stamps our religion [Christianity] as the only system adapted to the requirements of the whole human race—the only message of salvation intended by God to be gradually pressed upon the acceptance of all his intelligent creatures, whether male or female, in all four quarters of the globe,—I mean the position it assigns to women in relation to the stronger sex. It is not too much to affirm that the evils arising from the degradation of

[1] vii. 77, 8. Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. xlv. See Wheeler's *History*, ii. p. 502. R.-V., i. 117, 7; i. 116, 1.

[2] Dr. George Smith's *Life of Dr. Duff*, Pop. Ed., p. 290, and below, pp. 209, 210.

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women, or at least the assumption of their supposed inferiority, in the great religious systems of the East, constitute the principal bar to the progress and elevation of Asiatic nations.'[1] Women could not be highly respected if Indra spoke the truth in viii. 33, 17: 'Indra declared that the mind of a woman was ungovernable and her temper fickle.' Yet we find a Rishi praying, yea, repeating his prayer (ix. 67, 10 ff.), not only that Pushan should protect him in all his doings, but should also 'provide him with a supply of damsels'! That Rishis did not claim to be very moral, see x. 192, 1–3. Langlois, vol. iv. p. 477.

[1] We have not referred in the text to the custom of the 'self-choice,' called *Swayamvura*, of the maiden, in accordance with which a Kshatriya maiden was offered as a prize (as above, p. 163) in an archery match. But she had, it is said, the privilege of prohibiting any objectionable person from entering the lists. The question is more social than religious.

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XIII.

PRIESTS AND RISHIS.

THE common idea current among Indians is that the ancient Rishi was an ascetic, living in the jungle, always engaged in the contemplation of divine things; that he was another John the Baptist or a modern *Jogi* or *Sunyasi*. A favourite contrast of the Bengali is the modern Christian missionary and the ancient Hindu Rishi. The former lives outwardly like a man of the world, knows the full value of money, has a wife and children, wears good clothes, eats good food, and drives to his preaching or to his school or college in a garry or buggy. The ancient Rishi is supposed to have lived day and night under the shade of a tree in the jungle, half starved from want of food, totally indifferent to wealth of every kind, and having no house, no furniture of any kind, not even a bed or any clothing, save his tiger-skin and his yellow rag and dirt, without wife or child, or any desire for either the one or the other. His sanctity is supposed to have consisted largely in these things. As the Rishi is so very highly honoured, it is desirable that we should know, as far as possible, what he was and how he lived, at least so far as this

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can be discovered from the pages of the Rig-Veda. We proceed, then, to produce what information we can gather on this point.

Opening one of Wilson's volumes[1] at random, we read the prayer of Rishi Devatithi, the conclusion of hymn 4, of Book viii.:—

'Illustrious (Pushan) my cattle go forth occasionally to pasture, may that wealth (of herds), immortal deity, be permanent; being my protector, Pushan, be the granter of felicity, be most bountiful in bestowing food. We acknowledge the substantial wealth (of the gift) of a hundred horses, the donation made to us amongst men at the holy solemnities of the illustrious and auspicious Raja Kurunga. I, the Rishi (Devatithi), have received subsequently, the complete donation, the 60,000 herds of pure cattle merited by the devotions of the pious son of Kanwa, and by the illustrious Priyamedhas. Upon the acceptance of this donation to me, the very trees have exclaimed, "(See these Rishis) have acquired excellent cows, excellent horses!"'

In the next hymn, by Rishi Brahmatithi, we read: 'Bringers of the day, (bestow) upon us food with cattle, or donations of wealth; and close the path (against aggression) upon our gains. Bring to us, Aswins, riches comprising cattle, male offspring, chariots, horses, food. Affluent in sacrifices, grant to us who are opulent (in oblations) a spacious unassail-

[1] Wilson's *Translation*, vol. iv. p. 234 to end of vol.

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able dwelling. Bring unto us riches by hundreds and by thousands, desired by many, sustaining all. Affluent in oblations, bring to us with that (chariot) abundant food, so that there may be prosperity in horses, progeny, and cattle. Immortal Aswins, destroyers of the cities of the Dasyas, ye bring to us food from afar. Come to us, Aswins, with food, with fame, with riches, Nasatyas, delighters of many. Affluent in showers, taste the wakeful desirable Soma: combine for us riches with food. Become apprised, Aswins, of my recent gifts, how that Kasu, the son of Chedi, has presented me with a hundred camels and ten thousand cows. The son of Chedi, who has given me for servants ten Rajas, bright as gold, for all men are beneath his feet; all those around him wear cuirasses of leather. [Having taken these Rajas prisoners in battle, he gives them to me in servitude.]'

The very next hymn, by Rishi Vatsa, goes on in a like strain:—'Be willing to grant us abundant food with cattle: (to grant us) protection, progeny, and vigour. May that herd of swift horses, which formerly shone among the people of Nahusha (be granted), Indra, to us. . . . Thou art a Rishi, the first born (of the gods), the chief, the ruler (over all) by thy strength: thou givest repeatedly, Indra, wealth. The mortal (adorer) selects at the sacrifice Indra from among the mighty (gods): he who is desirous of wealth (worships) Indra for protection. I have accepted from Tirindira, the son of Parsu, hundreds

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and thousands of the treasures of men. (These princes) have given to the chaunter, Pajra, three hundred horses, ten thousand cattle. The exalted (prince) has been raised by fame to heaven, for he has given camels laden with four (loads of gold) and *Yadva* people (as slaves).'

Hymn 7th, by Rishi Panarvatsa, contains similar prayers:—'Send us, Maruts, from heaven exhilarating, many-lauded, all-sustaining riches. Munificent (Maruts), may these (sacrificial) viands, nutritious as butter, together with the praises of the descendant of Kanwa, afford you augmentation. When, Maruts, will you repair with joy-bestowing riches to the sage thus adoring you, and soliciting (you for wealth)?'

Hymn 8th, by Rishi Sadhwansa [Vatsa], goes on:—'From wheresoever (you may be) come, Aswins, with your thousandfold diversified chariot: the sage Vatsa, the son of Kavi, has addressed you with sweet words. Delighters of many, abounding in wealth, bestowers of riches, Aswins, sustainers of all, approve of this mine adoration. Grant us, Aswins, all riches that may not bring us shame, make us the begetters of progeny in due season, subject us not to reproach. Give, Nasatyas, food of many kinds dripping with butter to him, the Rishi Vatsa, who has magnified you both with hymns. Give, Aswins, invigorating food, dripping with butter, to him who praises you, the lords of liberality, to obtain happiness; who desires affluence. Confounders of the malignant, partakers of

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many (oblations), come to this our adoration; render us prosperous leaders (of rites); give these (good things of earth) to our desires.'

In hymn 9th, by Rishi Sasakarna, we find the very same requests:—'Whatever wealth may be in the firmament, in heaven, or among the five (classes) of men, bestow, Aswins, (upon us). I awake with the pious praise of the Aswins; scatter, goddess, (the darkness) at my eulogy, bestow wealth upon (us) mortals. Endowed with great wisdom, preserve us for fame, for strength, for victory, for happiness, for prosperity.'

In hymn 11th of the same Book, by Rishi Vatsa, we read:—'Desiring strength, we call upon Agni for protection in battles; upon him who is granter of wonderful riches (won) in conflicts. Thou, the ancient, are to be hymned at sacrifices; from eternity the invoker of the gods, thou sittest (at the solemnity) entitled to laudation; cherish, Agni, thine own person and grant us prosperity.'

We cull the following prayers, wishes, and desires from hymns by Rishis Parvata, Narada, Goshuktin, etc. etc., as they turn up in course:—'(I glorify Indra) the deity, who, coming from afar, has given us, through friendship, (riches), heaping (them upon us) like rain from heaven, thou hast borne us (to our objects). Bestow upon us, Indra, (wealth) comprising worthy male offspring, excellent horses, and good cattle; like the ministrant priest (I worship thee) at the sacrifice, (to secure) thy prior consideration.' 'When, Indra,

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who delightest in praise, may thy worshipper be entirely happy? When wilt thou establish us in (the affluence of) cattle, of horses, of dwellings? Or, when will thy renowned and vigorous horses bring the chariot of thee, who art exempt from decay, that exhilarating (wealth) which we solicit?' 'If, Indra, I were as thou art, sole lord over wealth, then should my eulogist be possessed of cattle. Lord of might, I would give to that intelligent worshipper that which I should wish to give if I were the possessor of cattle. Thy praise, Indra, is a milch cow to the worshipper offering the libations; it milks him in abundance of cattle and horses. Neither god nor man, Indra, is the obstructor of thy affluence, (of) the wealth which thou, when praised, designest to bestow.' 'Thou, the praised of many, reignest; thou, single, hast slain many enemies, in order to acquire the spoils of victory and abundant food. The heaven invigorates thy manhood, Indra, the earth (spreads) the renown; the waters, the mountains, propitiate thee.' 'They honour him with animating (hymns), men (honour) him with sacred rites, for Indra is the giver of wealth.' 'May this Soma, invested (with milk), approach thee, observant Indra, like a bride (clad in white apparel). Long-necked, large-bellied, strong-armed Indra, in the exhilaration of the (sacrificial) food, destroys his enemies. Long be thy goad [crook], wherewith thou bestowest wealth upon the sacrificer offering libations. With head

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uplifted like a serpent, adorable, the recoverer of the cattle, Indra, single, is superior to multitudes: (the worshipper) brings Indra to drink the Soma by a rapid seizure, like a loaded horse (by a halter).' 'Let a mortal now earnestly solicit at the worship of these Adityas unprecedented riches.' 'May the two divine physicians, the Aswins, grant us health; may they drive away from hence iniquity; (may they drive) away our foes. May Agni with his fires grant us happiness; may the sun beam upon us felicity; may the unoffending wind blow us happiness; (may they all drive) away our foes. Adityas, remove (from us) disease, enemies, malignity; keep us afar from sin. Keep afar from us, Adityas, malignity, ill-will; do you who are all-wise keep afar those who hate us. Radiant Adityas, grant to our sons and grandsons to enjoy long life. We solicit of the divine protector of the Maruts, of the Aswins, of Mitra, and of Varuna, a spacious dwelling for our welfare. Mitra, Aryaman, Varuna, and Maruts, grant us a secure, excellent, and well-peopled dwelling, a threefold shelter—[*Trivarutham*, a guard against heat, cold, and wet; or it may mean, according to the scholiast, *tribhumikam*, "three-storied." Sayana, therefore, did not believe that the Rishis of the Vedic period lived in huts or hovels]. Since, Adityas, we mortals are of kin to death, do you benevolently (exert yourselves to) prolong our lives.' 'He over whose sacrifices thou presidest prospers, having his dwelling filled with male

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offspring; he is the effecter of his purposes through his horses, through his wise (counsellors), his valiant adherents. Auspicious (Agni), they have set up the altars, have presented oblations, have expressed the libation on a (fortunate) day; they have won by their efforts infinite wealth who have placed their affection upon thee.' 'May I propitiate thee, Agni, by worshipping thee, by the gifts presented to thee, by thy praises; verily, Vasu, they have called thee the benevolent-minded; delight, Agni, to give me wealth. He, Agni, whose friendship thou acceptest prospers through thy favours, granting male progeny and ample food.' 'Agni, on whom thy other fires are dependent, like branches (on the stem of the tree), may I among men, magnifying thy powers, become possessed, (like) other votaries, of (abundant) food.' 'The magnificent lord, the protector of the virtuous, Trasadasyu, the son of Purukutsa, has given me five hundred brides. The affluent Syava, the lord of kine, has given to me upon the banks of the Suvastu a present of seventy-three cows.' 'The voice (of the Maruts) blends with the songs of the [Rishis] Sobharis in the receptacle of their golden chariot; may the mighty well-born Maruts, the offspring of the (brindled) cow, be (gracious) to us in regard of food, enjoyment, and kindness. Praise, [Rishi] Sobhari, (and attract hither) by a new song the youthful purifying showerers, as (a ploughman) repeatedly drags his oxen.' 'Whatever medicament there may be in the *Sinhu*, in the *Asikni*, in

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the oceans, in the mountains, Maruts, who are gratified by sacrifice, do you, beholding every sort, collect them for (the good of) our bodies, and instruct us in their (uses); let the cure of sickness (be the portion), Maruts, of him among us who for his wickedness is sick; re-establish his enfeebled (frame).'[1]

Such is a fair specimen of the prayers and desires of the ancient Rishis. They lived apparently like other men. Their desires were equally worldly. Their hearts were set on their wives, their sons (observe no mention of daughters), their cows and horses, abundant food, and good dwellings; and more especially on money, riches, wealth, or earthly prosperity. Our lengthy quotations will serve another purpose. The reader will observe the tedious repetitions which are so characteristic a feature of these hymns. The same prayers for the gratification of the sensual, carnal, and worldly desires occur so continuously, that it is a positive pain to read any large number of hymns at a sitting. One becomes sick of such praises and prayers, and longs to see men and women go about their ordinary occupations. As Macaulay says of the *Faerie Queene*, we doubt whether any heart less stout than that of a commentator, or,

[1] viii. 4, 19–21; 5, 9, 10, 12, 15, 20, 31, 32, 36–38; 6, 23, 24, 41, 44, 46–48; 7, 13, 19, 30; 8, 11–17; 9, 2, 16, 20; 11, 9, 10; 12, 16, 33; 13, 22, 23; 14, 1–4, 13; 15, 3, 8; 16, 6; 17, 7, 8, 10, 15; 18, 1, 8–11, 18–22; 19, 10, 18, 29, 30, 33, 36, 37; 20, 8, 19, 25, 26; including extracts from every hymn from the 4th to the 20th, except the 10th.

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we add, than that of a Sanskritist or antiquarian enthusiast, would have held out to the end. But the *Faerie Queene* is infinitely more interesting than the Rig-Veda to the ordinary reader. There is thought, sustained and deep, in the *Faerie Queene.* It is almost altogether wanting in 99 per cent. of the hymns of the Rig-Veda. In addition to adventitious circumstances that give it a special interest of its own, the reader has 'the satisfaction at finding it, in places, intelligible,'—an element that constitutes frequently the principal pleasure connected with the study of many foreign authors, and even of some books composed in old forms of our mother tongues.

You could scarcely expect, in the circumstances, much thought in the Veda, and your expectations are not exceeded by the facts. But one would expect sanctity, holy aspirations, contendings with sin, mortifications of the body and its lusts, ascetic penances. The present state of matters in India would lead one to form such expectations, whether we refer to the few ascetics, *Vairagis, Jogis, Sunyasis,* etc., met with, or to the opinions now current in regard to these Rishis of olden time, but the reading of large portions of the hymns does not justify such expectations. There is very little evidence that many Rishis, if any, lived such a life as they are credited with.

Tedious as these repetitions are, it is necessary that to these texts, taken at random, I should add a few selected passages further illustrative of the Rishis'

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manner of life. Take the following:—'Earning 200 cows and two cars with mares (or wives),[1] the gift of Sudas, grandson of Devavat and son of Pijavana, I walk about, as a priest does round a house offering praises. The four robust, richly caparisoned brown horses of Sudas, the son of Pijavana, standing on the earth, carry me, son to son, onward to renown in perpetuity.' Some think the two mares or females mentioned above were women. Dr. Muir says that in viii. 46, 37, 'reference is distinctly made to the gift of a woman.' 'Let the[2] ungodly man come forward who has received as large a present as this which Vasa, the son of Asva, has received at the break of to-day's dawn from the Prithusravas, the son of Kanita. I have received the sixty thousand and ten thousand (appropriated to) the son of Asva, two thousand camels, ten hundreds of brown (mares), ten of (mares) with three ruddy spots, and ten thousand cows. Ten brown, impetuous, irresistible, swift, over-bearing steeds of the bountiful Prithusravas, son of Kanita, cause the circumference of the chariot wheel to whirl round. Bestowing a golden chariot, he has shown himself a most bountiful sage, and acquired the most extended renown. As oxen approach the herd, so they draw near to me. Then when he had called for a hundred camels from amongst the grazing herd, and two thou-

[1] vii. 18, 22. Wilson translates the word *wives;* Muir, *mares.* Langlois makes the 500 *brides* of Wilson 50 cows. See viii. 19, 36, and above, pp. 161, 176.

[2] viii. 46, 21–33.

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sand among the white cattle, I, the Rishi, received a hundred slaves from Balbutha, the deliverer. These men of thine, O Vayu, protected by Indra, rejoice; protected by the gods, they rejoice. Then that large woman is laid away, covered with jewels, towards Vasa, son of Asva.' 'May the opulent prince who bestows on me speckled cows with golden housings, never perish, O gods. Over and above the thousand speckled cows, I received a bright, large, broad shining piece of gold. Men have exalted to the gods the renown of the grandson of Durgaha, who was bountiful to me in (bestowing) a thousand (cows).' 'Near me stand six men, in pairs, in the exhilaration of the Soma juice, bestowing delightful gifts. Of Indrota I received two brown horses, from the son of Raksha two tawny, and from the son of Asvamedha, two ruddy horses. From the son of Atithigva (I received) horses with a beautiful car, from the son of Raksha horses with beautiful reins, and from the son of Asvamedha horses of beautiful form. Along with Putakrata, I obtained six horses with mares from Indrota, the son of Atithigva. Among these brown horses was perceived a bay mare with a stallion, and with beautiful reins and a whip. May no mortal, however desirous of reviling, fasten any fault upon you, O ye possessors of food.' 'Eat, Indra, our cakes and butter. Be pleased by our praises, as a libertine [by the caresses] of a woman. We solicit Indra for a thousand well-trained, swift-going horses, for a hundred

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jars of Soma juice. We seek to bring down from thee thousands and hundreds of cattle; may riches come to us from thee. May we obtain from thee ten golden ewers, for thou, slayer of Vritra, art a bountiful giver.' 'I, a Rishi, have solicited king Kurusravana, descendant of Trasadasyu, the most bountiful of sages. Let me celebrate, at the (sacrifice), attended with a thousand gifts, (that prince) whose three tawny mares convey me excellently in a car. Of which, father of Upamasravas, the agreeable words were like a pleasant field to him who uttered them. Attend, O Upamasravas, son (of Kurusravana), and grandson of Mitratithi—I am the encomiast of thy father. If I had power over the immortals, or over mortals, my magnificent (patron) should still be alive. The man, even of a hundred years, lives not beyond the period ordained by the gods; so hath (every thing) continually revolved.' 'The Virupas, who sprang from Agni, from the sky, Navagva, and Dasagva, who perfectly possesses the character of an Angiras, is elevated to the gods. The sages (princes) in concert with Indra lavished a herd of cows and of horses. Men have exalted to the gods the renown of me Ashtakarni, who bestowed a thousand. Let this man now multiply; may he shoot up like a sprout, he who at once lavishes a thousand hundred horses for a gift. No one equals him, as no one succeeds in grasping the summit of the sky. The largesses of the son of Savarna have been diffused as widely as the sea.

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Yadu and Turva gave two robust bondmen to serve (me) with abundance of kine. Let not this man, the leader of the people, who lavishes thousands, suffer calamity. Let his largesses go on vying with the sun. May the gods prolong the life of the son of Savarna, from whom we, without fatiguing labour [or without cessation], have received food.' 'I have spoken this (in praise) of Duhsima, Prithavana, Vena, and Rama,—a god among the magnificent, who having yoked five hundred horses for our benefit,—their (liberality) became renowned by (this) course. Over and above this, Tanva straightway assigned, Parthya straightway assigned, Mayava straightway assigned (to us) here seventy-seven.'[1]

These Rishis were either in possession of these enormous riches or they were not. If they were, then their manner of life must have been luxuriant to a degree: they must have been among the wealthiest in the land, almost wallowing in wealth. If they were not[2] in possession of all this wealth, then it is clear that, with the view of increasing their own pretensions and exalting their own dignity, they inserted in their own hymns what they knew was not true.

I leave the matter undecided, and pass on to remark

[1] viii. 54, 10–13; 57, 14–19; x. 33, 4–9; 62, 6–11; 93, 14–15; iv. 32, 16–19.

[2] Dr. Muir thinks these Rishis 'enormously exaggerated' the value of the presents bestowed. *Oriental Studies*, p. 121. He also notices that 'in these eulogies of liberality, mention is nowhere made of Brahmans as the recipients of the gifts. In viii. 4-20 and x. 33–4, a Rishi is expressly mentioned as the receiver' (p. 122).

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that the Rishis' teaching or practice was not always very holy, as would appear from one hymn, which is understood to be a direct *encouragement to theft.* Rishi Vasishtha, one of the seven most renowned, had passed three days without being able to get any food. On the night of the fourth he entered the house of Varuna to steal something to eat, and had made his way to the larder, when the dog set upon him; the dog was however put to sleep by the following hymn, composed on the occasion by the starving Rishi. At least such is Sayana's story given in the *Niti-manjari.* The hymn is the 55th of the 7th Book. The second verse, with which I begin, is addressed to the dog, a descendant of Sarama, 'the bitch of Indra.' The verses, we are told, are to be recited on similar occasions by thieves and burglars. 'White offspring of Sarama with tawny limbs, although barking thou displayest thy teeth against me, bristling like lances in thy gums, nevertheless go quietly to sleep. Offspring of Sarama, returning to the charge, attack the pilferer or the thief: why dost thou assail the worshippers of Indra? Why dost thou intimidate us? Go quietly to sleep. Do thou rend the hog: let the hog rend thee. Why dost thou assail the worshippers of Indra? Why dost thou intimidate us? Go quietly to sleep. Let the mother sleep, let the father sleep, let the dog sleep, let the son-in-law sleep, let all the kindred sleep, let the people who are stationed

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around sleep.[1] The man who sits, or he who walks, or he who sees us, of these we shut up the eyes, so that they may be as unconscious as the mansion. We put men to sleep through the irresistible might of the bull with a thousand horns [the sun], who rises out of the ocean. We put to sleep all these women who are lying in the courtyard in litter or in bed, the women who are decorated with holiday perfumes,' or 'wearing garlands of fragrant flowers on festival occasions, as at marriages and the like.'[2]

Rishi Vasishtha must have been a bit of a wag. He addressed the Maruts: 'Vasishtha overlooks not the very lowest among you; Maruts, you are desirous of the libation, do you all drink together to-day of our effused Soma juices; come quickly, eager to drink the Soma; may the Maruts yet unrevealed, decorating their persons, descend like black-backed swans: let the entire company gather round me like happy men rejoicing together at a solemn rite.'[3]

We have mentioned above that at least one of the Rishis of the Rig-Veda was a woman. Another was no less than a king—'the royal sage Trasadasyu,' the author of hymn 42 of Book iv.[4] He was a king of the Cæsar and Herod stamp—filled with pride and self-importance. The hymn consists of ten verses,

[1] Baboo Peary Chand Mittra quotes this verse to prove that in Vedic times 'the feeling for rest was not only for the home, but for the neighbour!' *Calcutta Review*, January 1879, p. 171.

[2] Wilson's *Translation*, vol. iv. pp. 122, 123.

[3] vii. 59, 3–7.

[4] Wilson's *Translation*, vol. iii. p. 203.

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and the first six are in his own praise. Hence, according to the usages of the Rishis, he himself is his own deity in these verses. The other four verses are dedicated to Indra and Varuna. I shall give the six verses. The Rishi speaks in the first person: 'Twofold is my empire, that of the whole Kshatriya race and all the immortals are ours. The gods associate me with the acts of Varuna. I rule over (those) of the proximate form of man. I am the king Varuna; on me (the gods) bestow those principal energies, (that are) destructive of the Asuras; (they) associate me with the worship of Varuna; I rule over (the acts) of the proximate form of man. I am Indra, I am Varuna, I am those two in greatness; (I am) the vast, profound, beautiful, heaven and earth; intelligent, I give Tvashtri animation to all beings. I uphold earth and heaven. I have distributed the moisture-shedding waters; I have upheld the sky as the abode of the water; by the water I have become preserver of the water, the son of Aditi, illustrating the threefold elementary space. Warriors well mounted, ardent for contest, invoke me. Selected combatants invoke me in battle; I, the affluent Indra, instigate the conflict, and endowed with victorious prowess, I raise up the dust (in the battle). I have done all these (deeds); no one resists my divine, unsurpassed vigour; and when the Soma juices, when sacred songs exhilarate me, then the unbounded heaven and earth are both alarmed.'

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It is very clear from many of the passages just quoted that the Rishis were to all intents and purposes *priests.* They not only composed hymns, on account of which they were entitled to be regarded as *Rishis* and *sages,* but they offered sacrifices, oblations, and libations, as well as composed, chanted, and offered the hymns to the divinities worshipped. They were in these various capacities called by various titles, such as *Brahmans, vipras, vedhas, kavis,* etc. On account of its modern developments, the history of the word *Brahma* has come to be of special interest. To it I would devote a few remarks,—and, first, I notice that the original word *Brahma* was used in the sense of *hymn* or *prayer.* Dr. Muir quotes as many as 73 passages in which it is used in this sense. Hence *Brahman*[1] in the masculine, from *Brahma* in the neuter gender, means simply the person who composes or repeats the *hymn* or *prayer* (the *Brahma*). There are many texts in which this is the meaning which is attached to the word *Brahman.* As we have reason to believe that in the Keltic order the *Bard,* the composer of the hymns, was the same person with the *Druid* the priest, so the poet or Rishi was the same with the Brahman or priest, and called indiscriminately priest or Rishi. Afterwards, when the duties of the priesthood were largely multiplied, the

[1] 'From Brahma, Brahman was formed, its meaning being chanter of prayers.' Peary Chand Mittra, in *Calcutta Review,* April 1880, p. 726. See above, p. 116, and below, p. 192.

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offices of Rishi and priest became quite distinct, and that of the priest was again subdivided among various classes of priests. Dr. Muir quotes in full some eleven texts in proof that the word *Brahman* was used in the sense of 'contemplator, sage, or poet,' and upwards of thirty texts in which the word is used more in the sense of *worshipper* or *priest*, than in that of 'sage or poet.' Then he gives more texts to show that it came to be used in contradistinction with other words, also meaning priests, such as *hotri*, *udgatri*, and *adhvaryu*; thus meaning a special class of *priests* so called. It is worthy of notice that in the eulogies of liberality quoted above at length, the gifts are invariably spoken of as made to the composers of the hymns, never to the *Brahmans* as different from the *Rishi*. We ought also to bear in mind that the priests, as a class, came to be recognised in Vedic times as a profession; and though it may have, in course of time, come to be hereditary like the English nobility, that was very different from its becoming a *caste* in the modern sense of the term, of which there is not a trace, as we have already shown. We have also seen how kings were Rishis, and kings' daughters were married by Rishis.[1]

The strange thing is that some of these Rishis seem to have been accused in their own day of being demons, evil spirits, or Rakshasas, and worshippers of

[1] See Muir's *Studies*, p. 126; and v. 27, whose Rishis were three kings.

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false gods, at least that is Dr. Muir's interpretation of such mantras as—'Soma slays the Rakshasas, he slays the liar, they both sleep in the fetters of Indra. If I am either one whose gods are false, or if I have conceived of the gods untruly, why art thou angry with us, O Yatavedas? let slanderers fall into thy destruction; may I die to-day if I am a Yatudhana, or if I have injured any man's life. Then let him be separated from his ten sons who addresses to me the words "O Yatudhana."'[1] In explanation of this passage, Sayana refers to a Rakshasa having taken the form of the Rishi and killed one hundred of his sons, and that the Rishi uttered these words in the way of protest against his being supposed to be possessed by the demon. This again raises the question whether or not these demons, Rakshasas, whom the Aryans and the Aryan gods hated with such deadly hatred, were not rivals for worship and adoration. Hence the question has been raised, was not Rudra a demon originally, worshipped by the aboriginal tribes? Dr. Muir seems to favour this view, and adds: 'His malignant,[2] homicidal, and cattle-destroying character assimilates him to the Rakshasas and Yatudhanas. . . . If, however, Rudra really represents a god or demon borrowed by the Aryans from the aborigines, it was to be expected that, when adopted by the former, he would be in-

[1] vii. 104, 13; Dr. Muir's *Studies*, p. 136; vii. 34, 8; vii. 21, 5; vi. 62, 8; vii. 85, 1; v. 42, 10.

[2] iv. 3, 6; i. 114, 10.

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vested with the general characteristics which they assigned to their other deities.' But we cannot enter into this question, nor is this the place for it. It, however, naturally leads us up to another question of much importance, the relation of these Rishis and Aryans generally to the aboriginal inhabitants and to the now very popular doctrine of the fatherhood of God. This I shall take up in the next chapter. In the meantime, there are two or three further remarks that I would like to make on the large body of texts inserted in this chapter. And first,

I have not produced these texts as samples of the *prayers* of the old Indo-Aryans with the sole view of finding fault with them. I think it is a great thing in favour of these Rishis that they had such faith in prayer, even in prayers for temporal blessings, as most of them are. It is a commendable circumstance in their lives that their aspirations were towards the gods, and that these aspirations ascended on the wings of prayer. If their conceptions of the divine had been higher, holier, nobler, then the very means to raise themselves to a higher, holier, nobler platform would be to hold continual communion by means of prayer with that source, and to put themselves in the position of humble petitioners before the Creator's throne. A man cannot, day after day, besiege heaven with petitions for blessings on what he believes is base, mean, and wicked; he cannot always ask for what he believes to be contrary to the will and nature

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of his god. A bad man cannot long pray to a good god. Prayer is an element in which a bad, sensual, wicked man cannot live, unless he believes his god to be equally wicked or sensual. Observe further, that the Rishis' prayers were their *own*. However these prayers came to be afterwards regarded, in the Rig-Veda they are the simple, personal soul-outpourings of the Rishi composers. They were no *forms* of prayers. The book was not a *common prayer* book. Afterwards they came to be used as mere charms or talismans. But it was not so in the beginning. The Rishis of old clearly believed in the efficacy of prayer. Such verses as the following are common:—'May he [Indra] hear us, for he has ears to hear. He is asked for riches; will he despise our prayers? He could soon give hundreds and thousands; no one could check him if he wishes to give.' 'May the strong mountains hear us' (iii. 54, 20). 'Even from afar come to our feast! or, if thou [Indra] art here, listen to us!' 'Thou, O wise god [Varuna], art lord of all, of heaven and earth; listen on thy way.' 'We pray to the rivers, the mothers, and to the grassy mountains, to the sun and the dawn, to keep us from guilt. May the Soma juice bring us health and wealth to-day' (x. 35, 2).

The two hymns afterwards set apart for the consecration of the home, being the last two of the 7th Book, contain such petitions addressed to the guardian spirit of the house:—'Lord of the dwelling! bid us

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welcome hither; freedom from harm grant us, and happy entrance; as we approach with prayer, accept it of us; propitious be to bipeds and to quadrupeds.'[1] They believed, it is very clear, in the efficacy of prayer, and regarded their gods as prayer-hearing and prayer-answering gods. And though their hymns abound in repetitions, tedious repetitions, some of them in the style of choruses or refrains to modern hymns—as in the songs and solos of Sankey, or the Jubilee Songs—there is nothing in their prayers, as far as I am aware, of the 'Rama, Rama,' 'Hari, Hari,' 'Ave Maria, Ave Maria,' repetitions of the modern Hindu or the Roman Catholic, nor is there any trace of the use of the rosaries of the Hindus or prayer machines of the Buddhists. The prayers are partly laudatory, and partly supplicatory. The gods are invited to accept the sacrifices offered, or rather to sit down and partake of them, then and there, and to confer blessings in return. They are also largely praised for their supposed excellences, their great deeds, their personal appearance, or their accompaniments. Many of the prayers conclude with doxological sentences, like—'Let your spacious and bright-rayed chariots, Mitra and Varuna, blaze like the sun.' 'Praise-worthy Ushas, be glorified by this hymn.' There are some prayers or hymns that are mere invitations to the feast or the sacrifice, like that to Agni and the Maruts, commencing: 'Thou art called forth to this

[1] Colebrooke's *Essays*, vol. i. p. 112 (Whitney's translation).

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fair sacrifice for a draught of milk. With the Maruts come hither, O Agni. They [the Maruts] who are in heaven are enthroned as gods in the light of the firmament. With the Maruts come hither, O Agni.' And so it proceeds, every stanza ending with the same invitation to Agni—'With the Maruts come hither, O Agni.'

Brahmanaspati or *Brihaspati*, literally meaning 'god of prayer,' is simply a deification of prayer, and is represented of equal power with Indra or Agni, if not, indeed, of superior power. Just as food is necessary for the support of men, so it would seem to have been the opinion of these old hymn-makers that food was necessary to the very existence of the gods. Prayer is put upon the same platform with food, and is regarded as equally necessary, so necessary, indeed, that without it the gods could not exist. They would become, if not lifeless, at least powerless. This efficacy of prayer and of other religious actions came latterly to be regarded as equal to the dethronement of the gods. In fact, prayer is *Brahma*. '*Brahmana*,' Dr. K. M. Banerjea, in his learned and most useful book, *The Aryan Witness*, expressly states, what I believe is now universally conceded, comes from 'Brahma,' the original meaning of which is a *verse* or *prayer* of the Veda. Thus *Brahma*, prayer, came to be deified as the highest, the first of all the gods of the Hindu Pantheon; and the word is now made to do duty for the name of a society that

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claims to be monotheistic. However, as far as matters of taste are concerned, many would prefer to fall down and worship one of these old hymns and prayers, or even the interrogative pronoun 'ka,' *who*, than the gods Rama, Krishna, and Indra, as they are described in the later mythologies of India. But we have already referred to this point, pp. 116, 186.

Praise, we have no doubt, constituted a prominent part of the primitive religion. When the morning stars sang together, creation thrilled at the melody of sound:—

'From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began;
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.'

The song of praise, we have no doubt, was heard among the trees of Paradise, before discord was introduced through the machinations of the evil one. We know that at the annunciation of the incarnation of the *Son*, there was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;' and in the mansions of glory will be heard the voice as of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and singing a new song from the throne.

'What know we of the blest above?
But that they sing, and that they love.'

Coeval with the heavens, the destiny of sacred song

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is not like them to wax old. Throughout the whole history of man, from his creation onwards, praise to the Power above, the great Creator, has formed a chief element of his religion. Choral symphonies consecrated the worship of the Jewish temple; and however far some Christian sects may have separated from one another, and however far some of them may have separated from the truth, they have all retained the hallowing power of sacred music. There is no sign that in the religion of the future there will be any departure in this respect from that of the past.

The Rishis of India were sacred singers, chanters, hymnists, or psalmists. They composed sweet music, words and tunes, for divine service, and they themselves sang them. The whole Rig-Veda, from beginning to end, is nothing more or less than a hymn-book containing a thousand and seventeen hymns, each hymn set to some particular tune, and every hymn intended to be sung to the praise of some one or more of the gods in whom they trusted.

So much were these ancient Rishis under the influence of music, the sweet harmony of their own words and sounds, that they deified their hymns and worshipped them under the name of Brahma, just as the poet imagines was the case with the ancient shell.

'What passion cannot music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the corded shell,

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His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly and so well.'

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XIV.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

THERE is no doctrine that has of late years become more popular among the more advanced Hindus of the Presidency towns than this. Sermons, lectures, essays, and speeches multiplied upon it. This is specially true of the Brahmo Somaj. The doctrine may be regarded as the foundation on which the Somaj is built, only that of late it has assumed with some another form—the Motherhood of God, leading naturally to the sisterhood of man! God is represented as a mother, with tender sympathizing feelings of a more effeminate and gentle character than is supposed to be consistent with mere fatherhood. In any case, the favourite representation given of God is that of one who will not punish, but will always forgive, all whose creatures will be eternally happy, and between whom there will be no distinctions of favour or happiness. The great duty inculcated is to love all men without distinction of creed, race, or nationality, and with a love not only equal to that wherewith we love ourselves, but infinitely excelling. And all this is said

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to be intuitive. That it was not the creed of the ancient Rishis will, I think, be made very clear from the following texts. Though the old Indo-Aryans had not yet attained to the modern Hindu doctrine of castes, which inculcates the idea that, even as regards the Aryan race alone, there were three if not four separate independent creations of men, they undoubtedly taught that the Aryans were separately created, and were of altogether different blood from all other men. They are generally spoken of as 'descendants of Manu,' who is identified by some with Noah. However this may be, the following texts show to us very clearly that they did not regard the non-Aryan races as brothers, nor did they wish any good to the non-worshippers of the Aryan gods. They wished their extirpation, their annihilation; and they seemed to cherish neither a wish nor a hope that they should ever be blessed in the Aryan's religion or by the Aryan's gods. Out of a large number of texts bearing on this subject, I quote the following:—

'Distinguish between the Aryans, and those who are Dasyas: chastising those who observe no sacred rites, subject them to the sacrificer. Be a strong supporter of him who sacrifices. I desire to (celebrate) all these thy (deeds) at the festivals. Indra subjects the impious to the pious, and destroys the irreligious by the religious.' 'Do ye, O lords of the virtuous, slay our Aryan enemies, slay our Dasya enemies,

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destroy all those who hate us.' Dr. Muir well remarks, with regard to these and like texts, that they 'seem to leave no doubt that the Rig-Veda recognises a distinction between the tribe to which the authors of the hymns belonged, and a hostile people who observed different rites, and were regarded with contempt and hatred by the superior race.'[1] There is no doubt that in many passages of the Rig-Veda the words Dasya and Dasa are applied to demons of different orders, or goblins (Asuras, Rakshasas, etc.), but it is equally clear that in many texts the barbarous aboriginal tribes of India are intended. Manu expressly says: 'Those tribes in the world which are without the pale of the castes sprung from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet [of Brahma], whether they speak the language of the Mlechhas or of the Aryas, are all called Dasyas.'[2] It is probable, therefore, that the word Dasya, as employed generally in the Rig-Veda, is to be understood of *men*, and consequently of the wild aboriginal tribes, whom the Aryan-Indians encountered on their occupation of Hindustan. We see in the passages quoted how the Rishis regarded them, and what treatment they prayed for them from the gods. This will appear still more in the following texts:—'Indra, the slayer of Vritra, and destroyer of cities, scattered the servile (hosts) of black descent.

[1] i. 51, 8–9; vi. 60, 6; Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. ii. p. 378. See *Warrior's Hymn*, vi. 75; Wilson, vol. iv. pp. 22–28.

[2] Manu, x. 45.

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He created the earth and waters for Manu.' 'Thou hast preserved Trasudasyu, son of Purukutsa and Puru, in fights for the acquisition of land.' 'The deceitful, priestless Dasya has perished.' 'Remove from the sun the irreligious, the haters of the priest [or of sacred rites], who increase in progeny.' 'The Dasya, irreligious, foolish, observing other rites, and inhuman, is against us: do thou, O slayer of our foes, subdue the strength of this Dasa.'

Frequent mention is made of the cities of the Dasyas and of the Asuras, as in the following:— 'Exhilarated, I have destroyed at once the ninety-nine cities of Sambura: the hundredth I gave to be inhabited, when I protected Divadasya Atithigva at the sacrifice.' 'Indra has thrown down a hundred cities built of stone for his worshipper Divadasa.'

What language could be stronger against one's enemies than the following, or indicate greater sectarian bigotry?—'Kill all those who make no oblations, though difficult to destroy, and who cause thee no gladness; give us their wealth: the worshipper expects it.' 'Encountering those (Asuras) who carried away Dabhiti, he burned all their weapons in the blazing fire, and presented Dabhiti with their cows, horses, and chariots.' 'Root up like an ancient tree overgrown by a creeping plant, subdue the might of the Dasya; may we share with Indra (or divide by means of Indra) his collected wealth.' 'This lord humbled and subjugated the roaring Dasya,

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with six eyes and three heads.' Trita, increasing in strength, struck this boar with his iron-tipped finger.' 'Thou, Indra, hast hurled down the Dasyas, who, by their magical powers, were mounting upwards, and seeking to scale heaven.' 'Hereupon, O Agni, may Atri overcome the irreligious Dasyas; may he overcome hostile men.' A suggestive epithet applied to the wild tribes infesting the seats of the Aryans is *anagnitra*—'they do not keep the fire.' Thus we read, 'Agni, drive away from us the enemies—tribes who keep no sacred fires came to attack us.' In a famous hymn of Vasishtha we read, 'Indra and Soma, burn the Rakshasas, destroy them, throw them down, ye two Bulls, the people that grow in darkness. Hew down the madmen, suffocate them, kill them, hurl them away, and slay the voracious. Indra and Soma, up together, against the cursing demon! May he burn and hiss like an oblation in the fire! Put your everlasting hatred on the villain who hates the Brahman, who eats flesh, and whose look is abominable.' Agni is represented under a form as hideous as the beings he is invoked to devour. He sharpens his two iron tusks, puts his enemies into his mouth and swallows them (x. 87, 2 ff.). He heats the edges of his shafts, and sends them into the hearts of the Rakshasas. He tears their skin, minces their members, and throws them before the wolves to be eaten by them, or by the shrieking vultures. These Rakshasas are themselves called

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mad, and 'worshippers of mad gods.' 'A sound has been heard by our nearest foes; hurl upon them thy hottest bolt [O Indra], cut them up from beneath, shatter them, overpower them; kill and subdue the Rakshasas, O Maghavan! Tear up the Rakshasas by the roots, Indra, cut him in the midst, destroy him at the extremities. How long dost thou delay? Hurl thy burning shaft against the enemy of the priest.' 'May the man who seeks, with Rakshasas-like atrocity, to injure us, perish by his own misconduct. May they thy enemies be dead, then and there, through the greatness of thy thunderbolt.'[1]

There were three very different classes of men most heartily hated by the Rishis—(1) the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, spoken of under various names; (2) the despisers of the Vedic religion, who chiefly belonged to the preceding class; and (3) the niggard, illiberal Aryans, who gave no gifts or presents to the Rishi himself, either in his capacity of a bard or poet, or in that of priest, but more especially the former. The quotations already made sufficiently illustrate his hatred of the first class. The following will suffice for the last two classes:—'Indra, who alone distributes riches to the sacrificing mortal, is lord and irresistible. When will Indra crush the

[1] ii. 20, 7; vii. 19, 3; iv. 16, 9; v. 42, 9; x. 22, 7, 8; vii. 18, 16; vii. 6, 3; iv. 26, 3; iv. 30, 20; i. 176, 4; ii. 15, 4; viii. 40, 6; vii. 19, 2; ii. 14, 4; x. 99, 6; viii. 14, 14; v. 7, 10; vii. 104, 1; Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. ii. p. 407; iii. 30, 15, 17; viii. 18, 13; i. 174, 4.

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illiberal man like a bush with his foot? When will he hear our hymns?' 'Indra, who is the slayer of him, however strong, who offers no libations.' 'Wake, O magnificent Dawn (Ushas), the men who present offerings; let the thoughtless niggards sleep.' 'Slay every one who offers no oblations—though difficult to destroy—who is displeasing to thee. Give us his wealth; the sage expects it.' 'What do ye here, O powerful (Aswins)? Why do ye sit in the house of any man who offers no sacrifice, and yet is honoured? Assail, wear away the breath of the niggard, and create light for the sage who desires to praise you.' 'This impetuous and heroic Indra regards, as peculiarly his own, the cooked oblation of the devout Soma offerer; he is not the relation, or friend, or kinsman of the man who offers no libations; he destroys the prostrate irreligious man. Let the niggards sleep in gloom, and the regardless in the midst of darkness.' 'Indra desires no support from five or from ten (allies); he consorts not with the man who offers no libation, however flourishing; but overwhelms and at once destroys such a person, whilst he gives the godly man a herd of kine as his portion.' 'Whoever, O Maruts, regards himself as superior to us, or reviles our worship when performed, may scorching calamities light upon him; may the sky consume that hater of devotion. Why, O Soma, do they call thee the protector of devotion or our preserver from imprecation? Why dost thou see us

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reviled?' 'Hurl thy burning bolt against the hater of devotion, O wise deity; pierce the hearts of the niggards with a probe; and then subject them to us. Pierce them with a goad, O Pushan; seek (for us) that which is dear to the heart of the niggard; and then subject them to us. With that prayer-promoting probe which thou holdest, O burning Pushan, penetrate and tear the heart of every (such man).' In regard to the first verse of hymn viii. 83, Dr. Muir remarks that Indra and Varuna are said to have slain both the Dasya and Arya enemies of Sudas. His enemies were therefore in part Aryans, and the ten kings alluded to in the sixth verse were no doubt of this race. And yet it is to be observed that in v. 7 they are described as 'unsacrificing.' It would seem, therefore, that there were Aryan kings who did not worship Indra and Varuna.

We supply a few further texts from Dr. Muir:—

'The gods love a man who offers oblations; they do not approve sleep. The active obtain delight.' 'Let not violent fools, let not deriders insult thee. Love not the haters of devotion.' 'Let us praise Indra truly, not falsely. Great destruction overtakes the man who offers no libations, whilst he who offers them has many lights.' 'Let our hymns exhilarate thee; give us wealth, O Thunderer. Slay the haters of devotion. Crush with thy foot the niggards who bestow nothing. Thou art great; no one equals thee.' 'Let the godless man who performs no rites, and

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sleeps an incessant sleep, destroy by his own acts the wealth which sustains him; sever him from it.' 'I slay the man who utters no praises, who is an enemy of truth, a sinner, and empty.' 'May the (worshippers) who constantly bring thee to the sacrifices slay the boasters (or talkers) who give no presents.' 'Whatever godless man, whether Dasya or Aryan, O much lauded Indra, seeks after us to vanquish us, let these enemies be easy for us to overcome; through thee may we slay them in the conflict.' This passage shows that Aryans, as well as Dasyas, were charged with being deniers of the Aryan gods, unless we are to consider the term 'godless' as employed, as in modern times, to describe persons who were practically, though not theoretically, atheists. We end these texts with the following pretty strong one as to the way in which Indra would treat 'the rich man who offered to him no oblation:'—'Maghavat (*i.e.* Indra) grasps him in his fist, and slays the haters of devotion though unsolicited.'[1]

As far as we have seen, there is no trace to be found in the hymns of the Rig-Veda of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God or the Brotherhood of man. There is no trace of such a close and endearing relation between the gods generally, or any god in particular, and the human family, as to entitle any

[1] i. 84, 7; i. 101, 4; i. 124, 10; i. 176, 4; i. 182, 3; 25, 6; iv. 51, 3; v. 34, 4; vi. 62, 2-3; vi. 53, 58; viii. 2, 18; viii. 45, 23; viii. 51, 12; viii. 53, 1, 2; viii. 85, 3; x. 27, 1; x. 32; x. 38, 3; x. 160, 4. Muir's *Oriental Studies*, p. 134.

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of them to be called the Father of the children of men. The terms *father* and *son* are used to illustrate the relation of the god and the sacrificer, but only in the way of the latter praying that the god should confer some favour upon him, or treat him as a father treats a son. As to the brotherhood of man, there is no trace of it as far as I am aware, while there is abundant evidence, as we have seen, of an intense hostility cherished towards the non-Aryan tribes, as also towards some Aryans like the Iranians of the Zend-Avesta, an hostility which has come down in all its strength to the present day among orthodox Hindus. There was not the very best of feelings even among the Rishis towards one another. There are unmistakable references in the hymns to a deadly feud between Rishi Vasishtha and Rishi Visvamitra, and of a curse laid on the former by the latter. It is even said that the curse took effect, and that Vasishtha was changed into a starling, who, in turn, cursed his enemy and changed him into a crane.[1]

The horizon of the Rishi is confined almost invariably to himself. He prays for the happiness of neither wife nor child, not for the good of his village or his clan, nor yet for his nation or people. His eye is shut to the sufferings of his fellows. He manifests no common joys, any more than common sorrows. He does not look forward upon a more hopeful state of things. He knows of no promised Redeemer of the

[1] See Weber's *History of Indian Literature*, p. 37.

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nation or race. There is some enthusiasm manifested in beholding the storm gods, the rivers, and the mountains; none at the manifestations of righteousness and judgment and mercy. The Rishi is always in the outer courts of the temple, never in the inner or holy place of the Most High. In the Veda you have what may be called the earthly *poetry* of religion, but the downright serious grave religion of the Bible and of modern times is wanting. In reading Shelley's poem to the West Wind, I could not help being struck by the resemblance in form and spirit to the Vedic hymns. The Rishis heard the voice of their gods in the wind and the fire and the storm, but never in the still small voice. The only combinations into which these Indo-Aryans seem to have entered, were those of war. We read of very little even of that kind, very little of generals or leaders of armies, or of great pitched battles. Yet the lives they led seems to have been one continuous state of war, ever ready to avail themselves of any opportunity of making reprisals on their enemies. There was a recognition of a common relationship between all the Aryans as such, as descended from one common father Manu. The rest of the human race seem to have been regarded as altogether outside the pale of mercy or the ordinary demands of humanity.

How different is all this from the religion which represents all men as descended from one pair and made of one blood, which teaches all men to hope

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that the time is coming when the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head, and when all the nations of the earth will be blessed in Him, the sum of all whose commandments is 'love God and love thy neighbour,' the latter term including the despised and contemned whether because of race or of religion, which teaches us to honour all men, and even to love our enemies and to bless them that curse us, and which commands its followers to go forth and disciple all creatures, announcing the glorious news to all men that God has loved *the world* with so great a love that he has given his own, his only-begotten Son, to the death, that all who believe in him may not perish, but have life everlasting in him! Even M. Renan, who cannot be accused of being partial to either Jew or Christian, could say—'What characterised the Jew above all, what had always been his profound belief, was his confidence in a brilliant and happy future for mankind.'[1]

In regard to this subject there is one bright spot in modern Hinduism for which I must make space. And I cannot do better than give an account of it in the words of Dr. W. W. Hunter. I refer to a slight approach to the idea of the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God as illustrated at the Temple of Jagannath in Orissa, at least in theory, though in practice we have really only an illustration of, and a return to, the Vedic state of things. Dr. Hunter

[1] *Hibbert Lectures*, 1880.

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writes:[1] 'The true source of Jagannath's undying hold upon the Hindu race consists in the fact that he is the god of the people. As long as his towers rise upon the Puri sands, so long will there be in India a perpetual and visible protest of the equality of man before God. His apostles penetrate to every hamlet of Hindustan preaching the sacrament of the Holy Food.[2] The poor outcast learns that there is a city on the far eastern shore where high and low eat together. In his own village, if he accidentally touches the clothes of a man of good caste, he has committed a crime, and his outraged superior has to wash away the pollution before he can partake of food or approach his god. In some parts of the country the lowest castes are not permitted to build within the towns, and their miserable hovels cluster amid heaps of broken potsherds and dunghills on the outskirts. Throughout the southern part of the continent it used to be a law, that no man of these degraded castes might enter the village before nine in the morning or after four in the evening, lest the slanting rays of the sun should cast his shadow across the path of a Brahmin. But in the presence of the Lord of the world priest and peasant are equal. The rice that has once been placed before the god can never cease to be pure, or lose its reflected

[1] *Orissa*, vol. i. p. 85.

[2] *Mahaprasad*, rice offered to Jagannath and then eaten by the pilgrims and others.

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sanctity. 'In the courts of Jagannath, and outside the Lion Gate, 100,000 pilgrims every year are joined in the sacrament of eating the holy food. The lowest may demand it from, or give it to, the highest. Its sanctity overleaps all barriers, not only of caste, but of race and hostile faiths; and I have seen a Puri priest put to the test of receiving the food from a Christian's hand.' '"God's pity," says the chief apostle of Jagannath, "knows neither family nor tribe."' Such is the ancient doctrine, still preached. The following, from the same pen,[1] is a statement of the present practice: 'It would be well for Jagannath if these old calumnies were the only charges which his priests had to answer. Lascivious sculptures disfigure his walls, indecent ceremonies disgrace his ritual, and dancing girls with rolling eyes put the modest female worshippers to the blush. . . . But these are not the sole corruptions of the faith. The Temple of Jagannath, that *colluvio religionum* in which every creed obtained an asylum, and in which every class and sect can find its god, now closes its gates against the low-caste population. . . . Speaking generally, only those castes are shut out who retain the flesh-eating and animal-life-destroying propensities of the aboriginal tribes. A man must be a very pronounced non-Aryan to be excluded. Certain of the low castes, such as the washermen and potters, may enter half-way, and, standing humbly in the

[1] *Orissa*, vol. i. p. 135.

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court outside the great temple, catch a glimpse of the jewelled god within. But unquestionable non-Aryans, like the neighbouring hill tribes or forest races, and the landless servile castes of the lowlands, cannot go in at all. . . . Criminals who have been in jail and women of bad character, except the privileged girls, are also excluded.' Here we have the hatred of 3000 years' standing towards the non-Aryan races in much of its strength, and that where one would least expect it.

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XV.

MIRACLES, CREATION, DELUGE, ETC.

BEFORE concluding these notes, there are various other things on which a few remarks might be made, such as miracles, creation, the deluge, etc.

The *miracles* referred to are not many, nor are they very edifying. Indra is eulogized for having made a mare bring forth a calf, the young of a cow. His killing the pregnant wives of *Krishna*,[1] I suppose the *black* non-Aryans, could scarcely be regarded as a miraculous act. Miracles are more associated in the Rig with the doings of the Aswins and Ribhus, whose exploits are catalogued in a number of hymns,[2] some of them of more than usual length. The former healed of leprosy the unmarried Ghosha, while advanced in years. Yet, singularly enough, there is no direct allusion to her leprosy in the hymns, one of which runs: 'You bestowed, Aswins, a husband upon Ghosha, growing old and tarrying in her father's dwelling.' Further on, in the same hymn,[3] she is supposed to be spoken of in the words: 'You, (Aswins), have made whole the maimed; therefore

[1] Wilson, vol. i. p. 260. [2] i. 113-120. [3] i. 117, 7.

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has the intelligent (Ghosha) called upon you.' In another hymn[1] there seems to be a more direct allusion to her leprosy: 'The son of Usy addresses to you (Aswins) audible praises, in like manner as Ghosha praised you for the removal of her white-tinted skin.' The story is that the Aswins restored her to youth and beauty, so that she obtained a husband. A similar miracle is said to have been performed by them upon Rishi Sayana, whom they cured of black leprosy, and to whom they afterwards gave 'a lovely bride.' Some others of their miraculous doings are referred to in the words: 'You have restored milk to the cow; you have brought down the prior mature (secretion) into the unripe (or barren udder) of the cow. The devout offerer worships you . . . as vigilant in the midst of the ceremony, as a thief in the midst of a thicket. You rendered the heat as soothing as sweet butter to Atri.'[2] Another miracle of theirs recounted to their praise is: 'You constructed a pleasant substantial winged bark, borne on the ocean waters, for the son of Tugra, . . . and you made a path for him across the great waters. Four ships launched into the midst of the receptacle (of the waters), sent by the Aswins, brought safe to shore the son of Tugra, who had been cast headlong into the waters, and plunged into inextricable darkness. What was the tree that was stationed in the midst of the ocean to which the supplicating son of Tugra clung?'[3] Tugra had

[1] i. 122, 5. [2] i. 181, 3. [3] i. 182, 5.

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been much annoyed by enemies residing in a distant island. He sent his son with an army against them, but the vessel was foundered in a gale. The Aswins, Tugra's friends, assisted as recorded above. Elsewhere[1] the same Aswins are spoken of as those 'who gave milk to the barren cow,' who raised up from the water Rebha who had been cast bound into a well, who rescued Antaka when cast by the Asuras into a deep pool, who enriched Suchanti and gave him a handsome habitation, and rendered the scorching heat pleasurable to Atri, who enabled the lame Paravrji to walk, the blind Rijraswas to see, and the cripple Srona to go, and who set free the quail when seized by a wolf. Atri is said to have been enclosed in a cave, having a hundred doors, at all of which fires of chaff were kindled. The Aswins poured cold water on the fires, and thus the heat was made pleasurable to him. So says Sayana. The quail may have been with equal ease liberated. But we are told in the same hymn of still stranger exploits! They enabled the opulent Vispala, when she was unable to move, to go to the battle rich in a thousand spoils, and they enabled Rishi Trisoka to recover his stolen cattle. We need not wonder at the frequent mention made of the stolen cattle of Rishis, when we remember the large numbers, according to their own statements, which they possessed. But more than all this, they 'encompassed the sun, when afar off, to extricate him

[1] i. 112, 8.

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from an eclipse.' They protected Kali when he had taken a wife, and Prithi when he had lost his horse; they caused the royal Rishi Pathawan to shine with strength of form in battle, like a blazing fire piled up with fuel; and preceded the gods to the cavern to recover the stolen cattle, a feat similar to that ascribed to Indra. They gave a wife to Vimada, recovered the ruddy kine, and conferred excellent wealth upon Sudas. Such, among less important ones, are the great feats of the Aswins as recorded by Rishi Kutsa in the 112th hymn. The Rishi speaks from experience, for among the exploits he records, rather indefinitely it must be admitted, that they 'protected Kutsa,' how, when, or where we are not informed. In the same vague manner, he adds that they 'protected the devout Kakshivat.' Kakshivat, however, speaks for himself at great length, but almost in the same words with his brother Rishi. He has devoted five hymns, two of them of unusual length, to the glorification of the Aswins. They are the 116th to the 120th inclusive. The feats are very much the same, but with additions or other variations. Thus Kakshivat tells us that the Aswins not only 'gave a bride to the youthful Vimada,' but that they 'bore her away in their car, outstripping the rival host.' So he tells us that Tugra sent his son to sea 'as a dying man parts with his riches; but the Aswins brought him back in vessels of their own, floating over the ocean and keeping out the waters.' Nay

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more, 'that three nights and three days, they conveyed him in three rapid revolving cars, having a hundred wheels, and drawn by six horses along the dry bed of the ocean to the shore of the sea.' Still further, he tells them that this exploit they achieved 'in the ocean, where there is nothing to give support, nothing to rest upon, nothing to cling to,' yet they brought Tugra's son 'sailing in a hundred-oared ship to his father's house.' To another royal Rishi they gave 'a white horse, through the possession of which he was always victorious over his enemies.' This horse was 'always to be invoked.' To the composer himself they 'filled from the hoof of their vigorous steed, as if from a cask, a hundred jars of wine.' One of the most extraordinary miracles recorded is, in one hymn, attributed to the Aswins, in another it is ascribed to the Maruts. They are said to have, in some mysterious unintelligible manner, 'raised up the well, and made the base, which had been turned upwards, the curved mouth, so that the water issued for the beverage of the thirsty Gotama, the offerer.' Another miracle, scarcely less extraordinary, was 'the stripping off from the aged Chyavana his entire skin, as if it had been a coat of mail,' and giving him a new one, that of a young man, and 'constituting him the husband of many maidens.' But, in the opinion of the Rishi, these were nothing comparable to their extricating Vendana from a well. This last is spoken of as 'a glorious exploit, one to be celebrated, and to

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be adored;' yet apparently this was to be done simply 'with the view of acquiring wealth.' Another miracle, suggestive of modern mechanical skill and of Miss Kilmansegge's experience, is in these words: 'The foot of the wife of Khela was cut off, like the wing of a bird, in an engagement by night; immediately the Aswins gave her an iron leg that she might walk, the hidden treasure of the enemy being the object of the conflict.' These and many more wonderful things, Kakshivat tells them, they did, some of them while driving 'in their chariot, to which the bull and the porpoise were yoked together.' 'Thus, Aswins,' the Rishi ends his hymn,[1] 'have I declared your exploits; may I become the master of this place, having abundant cattle and a numerous progeny, and retaining my sight, and enjoying a long life; may I enter old age, as a master enters his house.' These must suffice as specimens of the exploits of the ever young and beautiful Aswins, the swift sons of the sun, the physicians of Swarga.

I must not, however, forget the miracles of the Ribhus, as it was because of them and their prayers that they were deified.[2] These are not very numerous, nothing like those of the Aswins. The first mentioned is the 'making fourfold the ladle for the sacrificial viands which the Asura [Tvashtri][3] had

[1] i. 116. [2] See above, pp. 47, 127, 211.

[3] This word *Asura* has given much trouble to Vedic commentators, from Sayana to Dr. K. M. Banerjea. In all modern Sanskrit litera-

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made single.' Another is, as in other hymns,[1] that they 'covered the cow with a hide and re-united the mother with the calf.' The story is that a certain Rishi's cow had died, leaving a calf motherless. The Rishi prayed to the Ribhus, who immediately formed a living cow, and covered it with the skin of the dead one, from which the calf imagined it to be its own mother. In some parts of the world the custom still prevails of killing the calf, and filling its skin with straw, and making the cow believe it to be its own living calf. This is with the view of prevailing on her to supply her milk. Such calfs are called Tulchans. Again we read: 'Through their good works,' the same Ribhus, as we are told in the same hymn, 'rendered their aged parents young,' or, as it is ex-

ture it means a demon, an evil spirit, an enemy of the gods or *Daevas*. And this is its meaning in many parts of the Rig-Veda. Yet here the good god Tvashtri is called an *Asura*, and in other places, Varuna, Indra, Prajapati, Mitra, Rudra, Agni, Pushan, and, in fact, all the gods are called *Asuras*. The Zend-Avesta also calls the Supreme Being *Asura* or *Ahura*. Dr. Banerjea has entered very fully into the whole subject in an article in the *Bengal Magazine* for April and May 1880. He thinks the word was got from the Assyrians, with whom it meant the supreme God. While the Iranians or Parsis and the Indo-Aryans or Hindus were on good terms with one another and with the Assyrians, the word was adopted and used for God. Then those hymns of the Rig-Veda using the word in the good sense were composed. After a time the Indo-Aryans fell out with both the Assyrians and the Iranians, and a fierce mutual hatred, as the hymns bear witness, was the result. Then the word, as applicable to the Assyrians and to their god or gods, came to be used in a bad sense, and have continued to be so used by the Hindus to the present day.

[1] i. 20, 110, 111, 161.

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pressed in the following hymn, 'they gave youthful existence to their parents.'

These must suffice as specimens of the Ribhus' miraculous displays of power. There is a miracle recorded of Indra's power at the expense of his omniscience; 'Indra, finding it impossible to discover his friend's stolen cows because of darkness, caused the sun to rise that he might see them.'[1]

Who should have the credit (?) of the miracle recorded at length in hymn iv. 18,[2] whether Indra, Aditi, or the Rishi Vamadeva? It is difficult to say. Indeed, all three are both the deities and the Rishis of the hymn, and I suppose all alike claim a share in the miracle. The hymn opens by a remonstrance from Indra to the Rishi, who is represented as in his mother's womb, protesting against being born in the usual way. 'Indra speaks: "This is the old and recognised path by which all the gods are born; so, when full grown, let him be born in the same manner. Let him not cause the loss of this his mother." The Rishi answers: "Let me not come forth by this path, for it is difficult of issue; let me come forth obliquely from the side. Many acts unperformed by others are to be accomplished by me. . . . Indra has asserted that it will cause the death of my mother. Let me not proceed by the usual way, but proceed quickly, according to my will. In the dwelling of Tvashtri, Indra drank the costly

[1] viii. 78, 7. [2] Wilson, vol. iii. p. 153.

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Soma from the vessels of the offerer."' This the Rishi had advanced as something irregular on the part of Indra, and therefore justifying an irregularity on the part of the Rishi. Indra's mother, Aditi, who had also been sent for, to plead with the unreasonable Rishi, 'speaks: "What irregular act has he (Indra) committed whom I, his mother, bore for a thousand months and for many years? There is no analogy between him and those who have been or will be born. Deeming it disreputable that he should be brought forth in secret [*i.e.* in the privacy of the lying-in chamber], his mother endowed Indra with extraordinary vigour; therefore, as soon as born, he sprung up of his own accord, invested with splendour, and filled both heaven and earth."' On this the Rishi breaks out in praise of Indra: 'Vameda speaks—"Exulting, the youthful mother brought thee forth. Exulting, Kushava [a Rakshasi whom Indra, although at first swallowed by her, drove out of the lying-in chamber] swallowed thee. Exulting, the waters gave delight to the infant. Indra, exulting, rose up to his strength; . . . as a heifer bears a calf, his mother, Aditi, bore Indra, mature in years. . . . Who has made thy mother a widow? Who has sought to slay the sleeping and the waking? What deity has been more gracious than thou, since thou hast slain thy father, having seized him by the foot."' It is difficult to say what the allusion here is, but it would seem to say that Indra slew his own

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father, just as Saturn mutilated and slew his father. The Rishi ends the hymn very sadly: 'In extreme destitution I have cooked the entrails of a dog; I have not found a comforter among the gods; I have beheld my wife disrespected; then the falcon (Indra) has brought to me sweet water.' It is not easy to see what earthly connection exists between this last verse and the preceding dialogue carried on between the Rishi in the womb on the one hand, and Indra and Aditi on the other. Did the Rishi in the circumstances lose caste after cooking, and no doubt eating, the entrails of the dog? Another interesting fact connected with this hymn is that the story on which it is founded, absurd as it is, is in accord with that of the birth of Sakya, the founder of Buddhism. But I must hurry on.

The Rishis' view of the great miracle of *Creation*, and the legend current at the time, I have already given.[1] But I would here add Dr. K. M. Banerjea's valuable remarks on the hymn.[2] He asserts that the things which Moses recognised as characterising the earth at its creation, 'are all mentioned in the above hymn. "Darkness there was." "This universe was undistinguishable *water*." "The abyss" or deep, identified with the *water*, was also allowed. The *productive* "energy above," and "nature beneath," in the Veda, were an apt representation of the *Spirit moving upon the face of the waters*. Here, then, we

[1] See above, pp. 129, 130. [2] *Aryan Witness*, p. 126.

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find the elementary existences mentioned by Moses all confirmed in the hymn. And it is in this confirmation that the best part of the hymn consists. As to the rest, we can only admire it as a candid recognition of the shortcomings of human nature, and a confession of the apostolical adage, *The world by wisdom knew not God.* We cannot, however, absolutely admire this ignorance or scepticism on the very foundation of all religion. There cannot be any religion in man, unless it has for its basis the relation of the creature to the Creator. But when a philosopher doubts whether there was any creation at all, or whether any supreme intelligence himself created it, and again whether he knew anything on the subject, we cannot recognise in it anything to laud or admire. We can only exclaim with the apostle, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"'

In the hymns of the Rig-Veda themselves there is no distinct account of the Deluge, but there are expressions which are suggestive of the story given in the *Satapatha*, the most complete and systematic, as well as the most important, of all the *Brahmanas*. The story may have been known to the ancient Rishi authors of the Rig, though they make no direct allusion to it. As translated by Dr. Muir, it runs as follows:—

'In the beginning they brought to Manu water for washing, as men are in the habit of bringing it to

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wash with the hands. As he was thus washing, a fish came into his hands, which spake to him—"Preserve me; I shall save thee." Manu inquired, "From what wilt thou save me?" The fish replied, "A flood shall sweep away all these creatures; from it will I rescue thee." Manu asked, "How shall thy preservation be effected?" The fish said: "So long as we are small we are in great peril, for fish devour fish; thou shalt preserve me first in a jar. When I grow too large for the jar, then thou shalt dig a trench, and preserve me in that. When I grow too large for the trench, then thou shalt carry me away to the ocean, I shall then be beyond the reach of danger." Straightway he became a large fish; for he waxed to the utmost. He said: "Now in such and such a year, then the flood will come; thou shalt therefore construct a ship, and resort to me; thou shalt embark in the ship when the flood rises, and I shall deliver thee from it." Having thus preserved the fish, Manu carried him away to the sea. Then in the same year, which the fish had enjoined, he constructed a ship, and resorted to him. When the flood rose, Manu embarked in the ship. The fish swam towards him. He fastened the cable of the ship to the fish's horn. By this means he passed over this northern mountain. The fish said: "I have delivered thee; fasten the ship to a tree. But lest the water should cut thee off whilst thou art on the mountain, as much as the water subsides, so much shalt thou descend after it."

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He accordingly descended after it as much as it subsided. Wherefore also this, viz. "Manu's descent," is the name of the northern mountain. Now the flood had swept away all these creatures; so Manu alone was left here. Desirous of offspring, he lived worshipping, and toiling in arduous religious rites. Among these he also sacrificed with the *paka* [proper] offering. He cast clarified butter, thickened milk, whey and curds, as an oblation, into the waters. Thence in a year a woman [called Ida] was produced.'[1]

The rest of the story I give in Monier Williams' versified translation:—

'She came to Manu; then he said to her,
"Who art thou?" She replied, "I am thy daughter."
He said, "How, lovely lady, can that be?"
"I came forth," she rejoined, "from thine oblations
Cast on the waters; thou wilt find in me
A blessing,—use me in the sacrifice."
With her he worshipped, and with toilsome zeal
Performed religious rites, hoping for offspring.
Thus were created men, called sons of Manu.
Whatever benediction he implored
With her, was thus vouchsafed in full abundance.'

As this legend, though I believe older in itself than the hymns, is not found in any of them, I shall not stay to point out its significancy from a Christian point of view.

[1] Muir's *Texts*, vol. i. p. 183.

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XVI.

CONCLUSION.

FROM our survey of the various articles of belief, and religious and moral practices referred to in the Rig-Veda-Sanhita, one can easily see that the Vedic religion can make no claim on the allegiance of any intelligent Aryan of the present day.

(1.) Its representations of the divine are always defective, generally false, and sometimes in the highest degree revolting. Such is the character of Agni (see above, p. 200) and of 'Mighty Rudra, with the braided hair, the destroyer of heroes'[1] (as given at p. 188). Even the ridiculousness of some of the descriptions is enough to condemn them. That given of frogs may be regarded as a satire, but no one, as far as I am aware, regards the hymn (iii. 8) dedicated to sacrificial posts as a satire, though about equally ridiculous. The hymn commences, 'O Vanaspati [the post of wood to which the victim is tied], the devout anoint thee with sacred butter at the sacrifice, and whether thou standest erect, or thine abode be on the lap of this thy mother (earth), grant us riches. . . . . Be

[1] Wilson, vol. i. p. 300.

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exalted, Vanaspati, upon this sacred spot of earth, being measured with careful measurement, and bestow food upon the offerer of the sacrifice. . . . May those posts bestow upon us wealth with progeny.' The hymn ends with the doxological prayer: 'Arrayed in bright garments, entire in their parts, these pillars ranging in rows like swans have come to us erected by pious sages on the east of the fire; they proceeded resplendent on the path of the gods. Entire in all parts and girded with rings, they appear upon the earth like the horns of horned cattle, hearing their praises by the priests: may they protect us in battle. Vanaspati, mount up with a hundred branches, that we may mount with a thousand, thou whom the sharpened hatchet has brought for great auspiciousness.' Or take the deification of doors in the words: 'Let the great divine doors, the promoters of worship, holy, and dear to many, stand open, without touching each other' (i. 142, 6). In the preceding stanza the sacrificial grass is honoured in the same manner. Again, Pushan is addressed (iv. 30, 24), 'May the toothless deity bestow the desired wealth,' because at Daksha's sacrifice his teeth had been knocked out by Virbhadra's followers. Further, the implements of war are worshipped in a hymn specially dedicated to the arrow. 'Weapons, persons, and implements employed in war are considered as the deities,' is the heading given to the hymn by Professor Wilson. The arrow has a feathery wing, and the horn of the

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deer for its point, 'bound to it with the sinews of the cow.' It is addressed: 'Arrow, whetted by charms, fly when discharged; go, light amongst the adversaries; spare not one of the enemy.' The concluding prayer is not very Christian: 'Whoever, whether an unfriendly relative or a stranger, desires to kill us, may all the gods destroy him: prayer is my best armour.'

Then, besides, there are such extraordinary inconsistencies as to who these gods are, and what their relation to one another. Angiras, for example, is in some texts identified with Agni, in others he is represented as the father of Agni, and, yet again, in others as his son.[1] Such instances could be greatly multiplied, and others may be culled from the preceding pages.

The ridiculous manner in which the gods are addressed, or speak of themselves, is very damaging to the claims of the Rig-Veda. Vasishtha addresses Indra 'desirous of milking thee like a milch cow at pasture, Vasishtha has let loose his prayers to thee.'[2] And his goddess queen Indrani cries out, 'This mischievous creature treats me with disdain, as if I had no husband or sons, and yet I am the wife of Indra, and the mother of a hero,' etc. In the same hymn she is spoken of 'as the most fortunate of all these females, for never at any future time shall her husband die from decay.'[3] Poor Indrani, both she

[1] i. 1, 6; 33, 1. [2] vii. 18, 4. [3] x. 86, 6.

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and her husband have been dead for many ages, and embalmed in the pages of the Rig-Veda. Indra seems to have had more than one wife. In iv. 16, 10, he is said to have conquered the enemies of the royal Rishi Kutsha, and thereafter to have brought Kutsha to his (Indra's) palace, and Sachi, the wife of Indra, could not tell which of the two was her husband, as they were both exactly alike.[1]

Nothing, indeed, could appear more degrading to the divine nature than some of the pictures given of the gods and goddesses of the Vedic Aryans, unless it be those given by their successors, the Puranic Hindus. The Rig-Veda consists very largely of just the deified forces of nature figured by a depraved imagination, and frequently fired by the worst of passions. And we are asked to fall down and worship these, simply because there are to be found in them various conflicting ideas of God, or in the worship some traces of a pure conception and of a holy worship. Why, such polytheism may be worse than atheism, as Professor Blackie shows. 'That man,' says he, 'is a traitor and a rebel, not only who pastes a public proclamation up in the market-place that the king has no right to reign, but much more rather the man who refuses to pay the taxes, disdains the accepted tokens of homage and draws his sword for the head of his own clan, and in the cause of his own kinship only, not for the head of the State. So, if the celebrated Macdonald

[1] Wilson, vol. iii. p. 148.

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of the Isles lost his haughty position in the Hebridean seas, was fined of his lordship, and swept all his clan with himself into ruin, as the natural issue of reiterated attempts to shake off the legitimate authority of the monarch to whom he had sworn fealty, in the same way it may be in the religious world, that if any people prostrate themselves before gods which are no gods, and whose intervention hinders the true God from being seen and recognised, they may be guilty of a conduct which is practically as bad, or even worse, than absolute atheism.' Such is the conduct of those who set up Indra, Agni, or Brahma to be worshipped, simply because they are Indian, and consequently 'National,' and thus prevent the people from knowing and worshipping the one true God. Such a religion may in certain circumstances be worse than no religion. The Hindu conception of the Divine Being has oscillated between the base low gods of mythology and the merely *absolute, unconditioned, unconscious* existence of metaphysics; and both conceptions prevent our seeing the holy, just, and good Father and Ruler of the universe. Both are consequently to be condemned and to be warned against.

The presence and the character of the Vedic goddesses increase the difficulties. Though Indrani be the wife of Indra and the mother of heroes, she does not command much respect.

2. There is about an equally erroneous conception

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of man, his duties and his relations to other men. In the Veda, man is generally looked upon as essentially of this world. He is constantly represented as taken up with the things of this world, what he sees, hears, tastes, and feels in it,—the glowing of the fire, the flashing of the lightning, the howling of the storm, the rushing of the wind, the splash of the rain, the rising and setting of the sun, the dawning and gloaming of the day, the number of his cows, camels, sons, and horses, the burning of his enemies' towns and the carrying of booty, the slaughter of the Dasyas and Rakshasas, the offering of *ghi* and Soma to Indra and Agni in the hope of receiving more sons and cattle and slaughtering more enemies. These and suchlike things seem to constitute the whole duty of man as he is represented in the hymns of the Rig-Veda. As a matter of fact, there is no attempt in the Vedas, or indeed in modern Hinduism, to give a correct conception of man's duties. The attempt, as far as any is made, generally misleads, as in the whole doctrine of caste, from its origin in the race distinctions of Aryan and non-Aryan to the endless ramifications of it in the present day. The Hindu religion throughout its whole history was regarded as far above such petty considerations as social duties. The duties of life were not inculcated in the ancient Vedic hymns, nor are they now taught in any Hindu temple. The gods never insist on their discharge, nor are there any prayers in the Veda to any god or goddess for help

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to enable the worshipper to discharge them. Hence morality and religion are completely severed in Hindu lives. And hence the fearful and bloodthirsty prayers to be met with in the Veda for the extermination of the non-Aryan races, and even of some Aryans, and the spirit of animosity cherished by some Rishis against others. A Vasishtha commentator leaves passages of the Rig-Veda unexpounded, because a curse is recorded in them against him and his family. Yet this bitter enmity is said to have originated in Vasishtha having at one time been appointed chief priest, instead of Visvamitra, by one of the petty kings of the time.

The relation of the sexes to one another is far from satisfactory, though much better than in modern Hinduism.

It has been well said, that if a person accustomed to compare and reflect were to read the whole of the Old Testament through, and were to state what two things struck him more than anything else as characteristic of it, he would answer, (1) Zeal for the unity of God, and (2) zeal for righteousness; or both in two words, 'Ethical monotheism.' Now in the Veda there is zeal for neither. There is neither ethics nor righteousness. In our survey, I think, I have made it very clear that instead of simple monotheism we have rank polytheism—and the ethics is all but absent altogether. Dr. Caldwell has certainly stated my experience when he says, 'If any person reads

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the hymns of the Vedas for the first time, he will be struck with surprise at the utterly worldly, unethical, unspiritual tone by which they are generally pervaded.' A religion of such a character had not sufficient amount of the salt of truth in it to preserve it from death, rottenness, and putrefaction. Hence what Baron Bunsen calls the 'great tragedy of India and of humanity,' the tragic catastrophe which landed the great bulk of the population in one of the most polluted forms of undisguised idolatry and of monstrous and cruel heathenism, and the few in a search after annihilation as the only refuge left, the single hope of man. Whatever may have been the intention of these hymns, they have become the parents of the rankest idolatry, the most unblushing atheism, and the most comprehensive pantheism. The parents are dead. What remains of them are these children, they themselves now suffering from the decrepitude of age. Of the hymns, we have simply the *dead relics* enshrined under the foundations of systems of thought and worship with which, in their life, they had no sympathy or likeness. But to proceed:—

3. While most of the authors of these hymns have set up for themselves no claims of being inspired, the claims set up in their behalf by their successors are so inconsistent with one another, or so absurd in themselves, that no one can nowadays accept any of them. Vasishtha thus sings his own and Agni's praises: 'Vasishtha, illustrious in both heaven and

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earth, rich with hundreds and thousands heads of cattle, has addressed this hymn to Agni, that such fame-conferring, fiend-destroying hymn may be the means of happiness to the eulogist and their kindred.'[1] Again, 'Well-kindled Agni, for thee the prayer (*brahma*) has been composed,' or in other words, 'The prayer a praise has been made'—a statement, as Prof. Wilson remarks, rather unfavourable to the doctrine of the uncreated origin of the Veda. Another sings, 'I compose to Agni, the son of might, a most invigorating and entirely new hymn and a prayer expressed in words.'[2] Some of these hymns were composed really to glorify men, as for example i. 126, which begins, 'I compose with delight no mean hymns to Bhavya who lives on the Indus, which indomitable king, desiring renown, performed a thousand Soma sacrifices for my benefit. . . . I, Kakshivat, accepted a hundred bulls of the great king.'[3] But it is unnecessary to multiply such texts. There is not a particle of evidence, internal or external, for the inspiration of these hymns. For,

4. *The miracles* recorded were never intended to be used as evidences of any kind. They cannot carry themselves, and still less anything else. They have no historical or moral evidence of any kind in their favour, and they were not intended to have. They are too absurd to be believed in by any who has col-

[1] vii. 8, 6. [2] iv. 6, 11; Wilson's R.-V., vol. iii. p. 134.
[3] i. 143, 1.

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lected or compared them. The miracle of creation is not given as a miracle, but as a tradition believed in, and received solely as such.

5. But, to my mind, the most damaging feature to the Rig-Veda's being regarded as a true religion, is the utter absence of any clear or definite information as to any reasonable way or manner by which men may be saved from sin, and all its fearful consequences. Though not formally stated, the way indicated is the composing of hymns laudatory of the gods, and the offering of Soma libations to the same. These seem to be the most efficacious, unless one be able to offer horses; but even these latter in Vedic times seemed to have had no pre-eminence over the hymn and the Soma juice. No one, nowadays, would look at either as having any pretensions whatever to be regarded as reasonable means of salvation.

It is rather remarkable that repentance has no place in such a scheme, nor have good works, labours of love, or acts of charity towards the poor, the widow, or the orphan. There is no saviour, properly so called, proclaimed, and none is promised. There is no one set forth as an authoritative teacher on the subject. No Rishi, as far as I am aware, has ever claimed to be commissioned by God, or by the gods, or any of the gods, to enlighten men in regard to his will concerning men, or men's duties to God, or to one another. No one claimed to have any authoritative announcement to make as to whence

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man came, or whither he is going, what his chief end here or hereafter. Though I have met thousands of Hindus who profess to revere the Rig-Veda as the highest religious authority, I have not met a single person who professes to guide his life by the examples or precepts therein recorded, or perform the religious rites or ceremonies, or worship the gods and goddesses of the Rig-Veda. I am aware that there are a few believers in Agni still to be met with,[1] but I have met none. And I question if any of them worship Agni according to the hymns of the Rig-Veda. They are mere fossils of a past age. The worship of Agni brings with it the worship of the whole Vedic Pantheon, as will be seen from his very character—for

[1] The two main divisions of the present Hindu worshippers of Agni are the (A.) Shagnika and (B.) Niragnika.

(A.) Shagnika worshippers are of two sorts, (*a*) Jatagnika and (*b*) Grihitagnika.

(*a*) A Jatagnika is one whose birthday ceremony is performed with fire which is kindled before his umbilical cord is cut, and which is preserved and worshipped daily till his death, when he is burned with the same fire.

(*b*) A Grihitagnika worshipper kindles fire at a *Darsapaurna mashika yaga* (a ceremony extending over a whole lunar month), and preserves it alive till his death, when he is burned with it.

These worshippers of the two classes are very nearly, if not altogether, extinct.

(B.) A Niragnika worshipper does not preserve alive the fire continuously, but kindles it at the time of sacrifice or Homa. This Homa is essentially necessary at the time of the investment of the so-called holy thread or *poita;* and of the marriage of a twice-born. It is also part of the great worships or poojahs, such as the Doorga poojah, etc.—ceremonials which require a *pratistha* such as *brata*, and *graha-yaga* or the propitiation of the nine planets (including sun and moon). In a Homa, Agni is first invoked or invited. He is then requested

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'three hundred, three thousand, and thirty-nine gods worshipped Agni.'[1]

The defence which some set up of henotheism will not stand any more for the Vedic religion than for modern Hinduism. It has been well said a man cannot grasp ten branches of a large tree all at once, so he cannot worship 330,000,000 gods and goddesses; he has therefore to rest satisfied in worshipping one, whether it be Agni, Brahma, Siva, or Krishna, leaving the others more or less neglected.

No theory can be set up that will explain the Rig-Veda, as a whole, in such a way as to commend it in our day, as a religion to be practised, with any expectation of eternal or even temporal benefit to the soul of man.

In a lecture delivered lately in Calcutta, and which made a good deal of noise at the time, not only in Bengal but throughout all India, twelve points were singled out as establishing a claim to regard Hinduism as superior to all other religions. The second of

to be seated, and afterwards, on being purified, he is worshipped. Ghi, or clarified butter, is made pure by the chanting of *mantras*, and is then poured on the fire as a sacrifice to Agni, and through him to the other gods. After the sacrifice is over, Agni is worshipped with a *mantra*. This is a brief description of a Homa. There are now living in Bengal many who perform these sacrifices.

It must, however, be admitted that almost all Hindus still worship the sun. They do so at the beginning of every religious act. I see them so engaged every day, especially at the time of bathing. The repetition of the Gayatri (see above, pp. 12, 93) is really a worshipping of the sun.

[1] iii. 9. See Wilson, vol. iii. p. 7.

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these was, 'that it does not acknowledge a mediator between the object of devotion and the worshipper.' Now Agni most clearly occupied this position of mediator between the worshipper and 'the older gods,' he himself being regarded as 'one of the younger gods' employed specially in the capacity of mediator. Further, the same lecturer adds—'The idea of *Nubee* or prophet is peculiar to the Semitic religions.' This is not true, as Keshub Chunder Sen so forcibly proves. The word prophet, as used in the Bible and in Christian literature, is by no means confined to the office of foretelling. It means one who tells and teaches God's will, one who informs us in regard to God with authority from God. And this is exactly the claim which Hinduism, all these years, has been making in behalf of all its Rishis, as well as the authors of the Puranas, including what are called Itihashes, the Ramayan, and the Mahabharata, and by many even the authors of the Tantras.

I may also refer to another claim which the same Bengali lecturer set up for the superiority of Hinduism. It is his *fifth:* 'That the Scriptures of other nations inculcate the practice of piety and virtue for the sake of eternal happiness, while Hinduism maintains that we should worship God for the sake of God alone, and practise virtue for the sake of virtue.' The lecturer must have been either totally ignorant of what he was speaking, or else he must have been speaking in irony, or intentionally trying to humbug

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his audience. Why, the most marked feature of the Vedic hymns is their inculcation of piety, *not* for the sake of God, *but* for the sake of cows, sons, riches, and food—all temporal good. The *sixth* is on a par with the *fifth*. It is, 'that the Hindu Scriptures inculcate universal benevolence.' *Benevolence* to the non-Aryan![1] Enough. Yet this is the lecture that received a notice even in the London *Times*, the writer of which says that the incident 'shows how necessary it is to have an able and thoroughly educated class of men as missionaries in India.' I think it is time that an effort be made to disabuse the Hindu mind of the pretensions set up for Hinduism, as far as these are founded on the Veda. It requires some knowledge of Hinduism, as found in the Vedas, to separate the truth from the fiction in the following, which is from the same pen:—'The lecturer then proceeded to show the especial excellence of Gyan Kanda, or the superior portion of Hinduism, as testified in its ideas of the nature of God and of revelation, its disbelief in incarnation and mediation, its rejection of all ritual observances, the stress which

[1] Indra, 'the hero and protector of the fair-complexioned Aryans, and the enemy and destroyer of the black-complexioned aborigines. . . . He was thus a national deity, showering gifts upon his worshippers, but trampling upon those who gave him no libations, as a strong man tramples upon a coiled-up snake. He slew his enemies by thousands, and destroyed their cities by hundreds; he brought back the spoil and recovered the cows which they had carried away. His worshippers called upon him to hasten, assail, subdue; to destroy his enemies with the thunderbolt.'—Wheeler's *History of India*, vol. i. p. 15.

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it lays on *Dhyan*, or the contemplation of God, as transcending the inferior offices of prayer and praise, and its having no appointed time or place of worship, and recognising no pilgrimages to distant shrines.' Of course the Rig-Veda is the first and highest of all the Hindu Shasters, even the highest of the highest, the Śrutis. Yet it recognises incarnation, mediation, ritual observances, and appointed times for worship; and prayer and praise do not occupy inferior places, but the very highest, as the most superficial knowledge of the Rig-Veda must convince even the most prejudiced against it. As to appointed times the Rig does not say much, but what does the lecturer think of the following hymn:—

'1. Agni, accept our offering, the cake, O Yatavedas, at the *morning libation*, thou rich in prayer.

'2. The baked cake, O Agni, is prepared for thee alone indeed; accept it, O youngest of all the gods.

'3. Agni, eat the cake, offered to thee *when the day is over;* thou art the son of strength, stationed at the sacrifice.

'4. At the *midday libation*, O Yatavedas, accept here the cake; O sage Agni, the wise do not diminish at the share of thee, who art great.

'5. Agni, as thou lovest at *the third libation* the cake, O son of strength, that is offered to thee, therefore, moved by our praise, take this precious oblation to the immortal gods to rouse them.

'6. Agni, thou who art growing, accept, O

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Yatavedas, the offering, the cake, at the *close of day.*'

The Book and the temple of Hinduism are both shut to the children of men. The highest and best, the holiest and most philanthropic, were excluded. Right of admission was not founded on such considerations as either character or conduct, likeness to God, or brotherliness towards men. The Christian Book and the Christian Church are opened to all, without distinction of race, country, colour, or nationality. The Bible, though not Indian, has been translated into almost every language of India, the Rig-Veda into not one. A commencement has been made with regard to a Bengali[1] and a Marathi translation; but not many of the present generation are likely to see either completed. If the Vedic religion be able to save from sin and its dire results, the blood of many is on the heads of those pundits who profess to have the key of knowledge, and have never opened the door. The Christian and the European have forced the key out of the hands of those who entered not themselves and would not allow others to enter, and they have entered and found the place filled with dead men's bones and a few mummies of some beauty, which are now being placed in our museums. How different is all this from Christianity, within whose portals all are invited, and when you enter you

[1] The Bengali translation was discontinued two years ago, and the Marathi has only just finished the first of ten Books.—Aug. 1881.

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find life, light, love and law, beauty and order! You meet there in loving embrace Aryan and non-Aryan, all the races of men glorifying one loving Father. I have never met with a single Vedic hymn, or a selection of such, put into circulation by a Hindu for the instruction or spiritual edification of the millions who profess to venerate it. Whatever circulation these have attained, they have found at the hands of Christians. What a contrast this to the action of our various Bible Societies!

I must forbear. I have said enough to convince any one open to conviction, that the Rig-Veda, whatever its beauties and its truths may be (and these, as we shall presently see, are neither very few nor unimportant), cannot be received in our day as God-given. It must be rejected as a false religion by every true son of man who thoroughly knows it.

Let us now proceed, then, to the pleasanter task of considering some of its truths, its beauties, that must commend it, so far, to the truly pious of all ages. For as one 'finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything,' so one finds truths of much importance and beauties of some value in the hymns of the Rig-Veda.

My study of the Rig-Veda has convinced me that there are in it things that suggest, if they do not prove, that at the beginning a revelation was given by God to man of himself, of his will concerning man, and of the duties of man towards God and

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towards his brother man. Before closing my remarks, I would like to indicate some of these.

1. *Praise*, as we have seen, forms a large part of the Rig-Veda. It is laudatory of the divine. The gods are praised for what they are, and for what they have done for man. This praise is invariably in metre, set to music. I think this is primitive and suggestive of the true religion. It is a formal dedication of the sense of music, which is original, to the highest and holiest purpose. Metre and music were evidently largely developed at the time when the Sanhita was written, but the talent was original, and early consecrated to God's service. It is still more developed now, but yet its connection with God's praise continues, and will, I believe, continue throughout all eternity.

2. *Prayer.* About equally prominent in the Veda is the element of prayer, implying trust and confidence in the divine. All religion implies this. Without faith no one can worship God aright; and faith in him leads at once to *prayer* to him, prayer always for the supply of man's most pressing wants and the removal of his greatest sources of trouble. The Rishis were troubled more with the physical and the carnal. Hence their prayers had more to do with such. But as to the fact of prayer—why, they were apparently 'praying without ceasing.' Would that their descendants were equally mindful of prayer, and equally earnest in the practice of it! Not mere

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forms, but downright earnest prayer in the firm faith that they would be answered. Still it was prayer in the dark. For they were but—

'Infants crying in the night:
Infants crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.'

3. *Sacrifice.* There is something mysterious in regard to the nature and position of the Vedic sacrifices, whether they be cakes, soma, bulls, horses, the human or the divine. They sacrificed morning, noon, evening, and night, with new and full moon, to get rid of sin; but their experience may be described in the words of the well-known hymn (with the change of one word):

'Not all the blood of beasts,
On Aryan altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.'

They seem to have had an idea of this, and at the same time a faint recollection of some great doctrine taught them in the past concerning the 'Lord of creatures' himself, whose death was to be immortality to men, and who was to be the sacrifice for men.

Whether this be true or not, there are, undoubtedly, references to sacrifices by the divinities themselves, of themselves, for the benefit of glorified men; for so, it is held, is the meaning of such texts as: 'The gods, in performing their sacrifice,

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bound Purusha [a divine being] as victim.' The hymn from which the above is an extract is known as the Purusha hymn, the 90th of the 10th Book. In the 121st hymn of the same Book, Hiranyagarbha, who is identified as Prajapati, the Lord of creatures, is called *Atmada* (giver of self), 'whose shadow, whose death, is immortality to us.' Elsewhere it is said that Prajapati, 'the Lord of creatures, offered himself a sacrifice for the Devas,' who, as we have said, were glorified men. In hymn x. 81, Visvakarman, 'the lord of speech,' is also said to have 'offered himself a sacrifice to himself,' or, as Nirukta explains it, 'the omniscient (for that is the meaning of the name) Creator first of all offered up all worlds in a general sacrifice, and ended by sacrificing himself.' In the absence of any other more reasonable explanation of the Vedic sacrifices generally, and of the Purusha or Prajapati sacrifice in particular, I conclude, with the learned and venerable Dr. K. M. Banerjea, that in these sacrifices we find traces of 'a primitive tradition of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

As an illustration of the power of sacrifice, take the story of the leading Brahmana of the Rig:[1]—

'The gods and demons were engaged in warfare.
The evil demons, like to mighty kings,
Made these worlds castles; then they formed the earth

[1] *Aitareya Brahmana*, Haug's Edition, i. 23.

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Into an iron citadel, the air
Into a silver fortress, and the sky
Into a fort of gold. Whereat the gods
Said to each other, "Frame we other worlds
In opposition to these fortresses."
Then they constructed sacrificial places,
Where they performed a triple burnt oblation.
By the first sacrifice they drove the demons
Out of their earthly fortress, by the second
Out of the air, and by the third oblation
Out of the sky. Thus were the evil spirits
Chased by the gods in triumph from the worlds.'[1]

Dr. Banerjea classifies the Vedic uses of the sacrifice as follows:—(1) The sacrificer was identified with the victim, as the ransom for sin; (2) Sacrifice was the great remedy for the ills of life, the ship or ark by which we escape sin and all worldly perils; and (3) Sacrifice was the instrument by which sin and death are annulled and abolished. In proof of the first he quotes the words: 'The sacrificer is himself the victim. It takes the very sacrificer himself to heaven.'[2] The Brahman commentator explains: 'The animal being for the redemption of the sacrificer, it leads the sacrificer himself to heaven.' So again, 'Even by this the sacrificer redeems himself.'[3] 'The

[1] Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom*, p. 32.
[2] *Taittiriya Brahmana*, pp. 202, 448.
[3] *Aitareya Brahmana*, p. 27.

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sacrificer kills on the day previous to the Soma festival an animal devoted to Agni-Soma, thus redeeming himself from the obligation of being himself sacrificed. He then brings his Soma sacrifice, after having thus redeemed himself and become free from debts. Thence the sacrificer ought not to eat of the flesh of this (animal).'

We have already quoted enough in support of the second position. I have also quoted above that remarkable passage in support of the third, in which the sacrifice is represented as *the annulment of sin*, not only of the sacrificer's own sins, but of the sins of all *devas* and men, that is to say, of the whole world, suggestive of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and who is a propitiation 'not for our sins only, but for the whole world.'

4. In the traditions of the *Creation, the Deluge*, etc., and more particularly the *first* of these, we find, I think, traces of the primitive religion. I have given the tradition of the creation above, as recorded in one of the hymns, and would now only draw attention to the resemblance subsisting between it and the account given in Genesis. Let one observe the position which *darkness, water*, the *abyss*, the brooding spirit or energy above, and Nature beneath, occupy in both, and he must be persuaded that they must have had a common origin, and that origin none other than that recorded in the first chapters of Genesis.

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(5) *The deprivation of the Indo-Aryans' conceptions of the Divine.* We have in the Rig comparatively pure and lofty conceptions of the divine; but we have also very ignoble, gross, and mean ideas. There are undoubted forms of fetishism to be met with; there are other texts that might, in the absence of all others, be regarded as monotheistic. Which of these is the oldest and which the latest? I think the evidence hitherto produced goes very clearly to prove that the best is the oldest. These are associated with Varuna and Dyaus; and they are spoken of as 'the oldest of the gods.' Whatever fetishism manifests itself in the Rig-Veda is very plainly a much later growth than these older gods. Such worship as we observe given to rivers, posts, water, grass, doors, the hymns under the name of Brahma, etc., is evidently of a more modern origin.

There is something of the old truth to be found even in fetishism as a worship of the phenomena of Nature, or the works of God, in which there is something to be venerated, as the poetic feelings of some of the greatest of men in all ages of the world have felt. It was so with Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Cowper. Of course there may be much of this without any true religion, but it generally accompanies the highest and the most complete manifestations of the true religion. And so it is also with polytheism, or the worship of the many as distinguished from the worship of the one. God does manifest Himself in

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the many, manifoldly. The plural was used from the beginning in connection with the name and nature of God, and so far there is truth even in polytheism; and all the truth that is in it finds a place in Christianity, in whose idea of God there is plurality as well as unity, a trinity in unity and a unity in trinity. The sin of fetishism and of polytheism is one. It is placing something before the eye, even though that be God's creature and in itself good, true, and beautiful, so as to prevent the worshipper from seeing God in his beauty, and worshipping Him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth.

More of God was seen in the worship of the earlier gods of the Rig than in the later. Max Müller asserts this very plainly in his *History of Sanskrit Literature:* 'There is a monotheism that precedes the polytheism of the Veda, and even in the invocations of their innumerable gods the remembrance of a God, one and infinite, breaks through the mist of an idolatrous phraseology, like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds.' The same doctrine, in spite of other things which seem to contradict, appears in his latest utterance—the sixth of the *Hibbert Lectures,* where he says: 'The ancient Aryans felt from the beginning, ay, it may be, more in the beginning than afterwards, the presence of a *beyond,* of an *infinite,* of a *divine,* or whatever else we may call it now; and they tried to grasp and comprehend it, as we all do, by giving to it name after name.'

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The history of the rise of *Brahma* given above (pp. 116, 186, 192) proves very conclusively the depravation to which the conception of the divine was subjected. One of the latest additions to the Hindu Pantheon must have been Jagannath in Orissa. It was originally a fetish of the non-Aryan forest-men. The common story current in Cuttack as given by Dr. Hunter proves this. It shows how 'the *blue* god,' Nil Madhub, of the aboriginal fowler, became the Jagannath, the Lord of the World, of the Brahman. The non-caste food of the Mahaprasad, even though now the non-Aryan himself is excluded, is a natural fruit of its non-Aryan origin. Hinduism is very receptive. Many of its gods were those originally of the aboriginal fetish-worshippers. The processions of Jagannath's car, and even the shape of the idol, are said to have been of Buddhistic origin; and just as Hinduism is ever ready to receive and borrow from outside, so it is also equally ready to throw away what it no longer uses. All the Vedic gods are really disposed of. They are no longer worshipped. Agni is scarcely an exception. The Veda itself was really buried, and if Europeans had not resuscitated it, it would have remained buried. Some of its words are still, no doubt, used in the daily sacrifice by every Brahman, but used unintelligibly, as mere cabalistic sounds. The *Gayatri* is still repeated every morning by the orthodox Brahman, but scarcely one in a hundred knows its meaning.

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Altogether, I think, the Rig-Veda supports Lessing's position in his work on *The Education of Mankind*:— 'Even if the first man was immediately furnished with a conception of the one true God, this conception, which was communicated and not acquired, could not possibly remain long in its purity. As soon as human reason, left to itself, began to work upon this conception, it dissected the one Infinite Being into many finite ones, and gave a characteristic to each of these parts. Thus polytheism and idolatry naturally arose.' Hence the absolute necessity of a family being specially set apart and instructed to preserve it pure. Professor Ebrard claims to have proved, in his learned work on *Apologetics*, that there is found 'in all the civilised peoples of antiquity, and in proportion as we ascend into the past, a greater approximation to the knowledge of the one, living, holy God, in conjunction with a more vivid ethical consciousness of the difference between good and evil, and a more ardent longing for an expected Redeemer; and that as we come down the course of time, we mark a depravation of this primitive religion, owing to the diminution of moral earnestness, so that the knowledge of God is corrupted into gross polytheism, which in some peoples passes over into pantheism; and along with this religious depravation we mark a growing moral degeneracy, notwithstanding all outward advances in the arts, in civilisation, and culture. And when we engage in the investigation of savage nations,

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of their conditions, languages, and traditions, we find here too, where we possess any reliable data to proceed on, a constant sinking lower and lower, and at the same time, almost everywhere, reminiscences of an older and better state; and here and there we meet with visible monuments which bear witness to this former higher condition.' There are in the Rig-Veda, I think, what goes very far to prove the truth of all this. Though scarcely belonging to my subject, I can hardly withhold all reference to the Weddas, a thoroughly savage race in Ceylon, who are believed to be descended from the comparatively civilised Aryan followers of Rama. But I must hurry on to remark on,

6.) *The Resurrection of the body.* The wise men of mediæval Hinduism, as well of the heathenism of Greek and Rome, used to speak rather slightingly of the body, if not indeed contemptuously. Many modern Hindus are apt to do the same. So also do positivists in regard to the bodies of the great mass of men; the soul, as immortal and immaterial, they deny altogether. Christians, all along, have spoken respectfully of the body and treated it accordingly, as they hold all the work of God should. But, further, they looked forward, beyond death and the grave, to a renewed association with a glorified, risen, spiritualized body. As God is the God of Abraham, so he is our God, not of the soul only, but of ourselves—body, soul, and spirit, without distinction—in all our substantial parts

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and attributes. We cannot determine in what exact sense our bodies will be, at the resurrection, the same bodies that we have at present, because we have no idea what constitutes identity. The elemental or constituent parts do not, for these continually change. The form does not, for it also changes. Yet we have no hesitation in predicating identity of the old man now of eighty and the boy who was only ten, seventy years ago. Thus, though we cannot explain or understand, we have no difficulty in believing. Of the essence of matter or of mind we know nothing, as separated from certain attributes or qualities; and these vary in varying circumstances. (See pp. 52–55.)

The Rishis of the Rig-Veda clearly believed in risen bodies. The deified Ribhis had bodies, and so indeed had all the gods. Indra had, in any case, a beautiful nose and chin and a powerful fist. Pushun was toothless, while Agni had dreadful tusks; and he was particularly careful of the bodies of those committed to his care. They believed that the body was, somehow, purified by fire, but still carried perfect in all its parts to heaven. The Fathers or Pitris were believed to 'rejoice in heaven with all their limbs.'

(7) *Sin and disease.* The Indo-Aryans of the Rig-Veda period had sad acquaintance with *sin*, and with *disease* as the fruit of sin. They spoke of the bonds, the burden, and the darkness of sin. And they spoke of sacrifice as the boat by means of which we might escape over the deluge of sin. True, they could not

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explain how sacrifice could be a boat. They had no knowledge of 'the Lamb slain.' But yet they were conscious of sin, and believed in sacrifice as the means of escape. Was it a gleam they had of the great coming Sacrifice, or a dream of the primitive revelation given to their own ancestors? They were groping in the darkness. Was it of the passing day and the coming night, or of the passing night and approaching day? We believe the former. They were, as one of themselves expressed it, 'yearning for Varuna, the far-seeing, their thoughts moved onward as kine move to their pastures.'[1] But, unfortunately for them, they had turned their backs on God, and the more they moved onwards the farther they went from God. Their souls thirsted for God, but to them he was an unknown God. They felt the need of a being, divine and human, who would represent them in the Court of Heaven, and yet would condescend to take up his abode with men on earth. This they thought they found in Agni.

8. The next point, therefore, to which I would like to refer in the Rig-Veda as evidential of the primitive religion, is the doctrine of a Mediator, of which we find traces in almost all hymns addressed to Agni. The Rishis addressed themselves directly to the gods, as Christians do to God. Still they continually looked up to Agni as the mediator and the messenger between heaven and earth, between gods and men,

[1] Johnson's *Oriental Religions*, pp. 120-122.

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who, on the one hand, carried the sacrifice and presented it to the gods, and on the other, brought down the gods to men, and brought the expected blessing with him. The Rig-Veda is filled with Agni,

'Who bears aloft,
And offers to the gods the sacrifice.'

In him also we think we can find traces of the traditions of Him in Whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and whose heel was to crush the serpent's head.

From the above it will be seen that Christianity contains the complement and full development of some portions of the Vedic religion, portions which the Hindus themselves have failed to appreciate. In Christianity is to be found the secret of their sacrifices, their mediators, their incarnations, their searchings after the divine, their inspirations and their revelations. Well may we say with the apostle, 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare we unto you.'

In our investigations into the truth in regard to anything, it is of the greatest importance that we should consider differences as well as points of likeness. I, for one, am delighted to find what I regard as points of likeness to Christianity in these ancient hymns, and still more to find 'grains of truth' among so much rubbish; but I must not shut my eyes to the fact that so very large a portion is rubbish, and that large portions are worse than rubbish, even poisonous

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weeds, or seeds that very soon developed into coarser forms of undisguised irretrievable idolatry, monstrous, immoral, absurd, and cruel, never varied during these three thousand years except it be by atheism and pantheism; while, on the other hand, the 'grains of truth' were the seeds of no spiritual truth to the many millions that succeeded during the ages that followed. These grains were like those of wheat found buried with the mummies of Egypt for thousands of years,—useless, dry, and unproductive. Or, changing the figure, the hymns of the Veda might be likened to the dry dead surface of the moon, with its burnt-out and extinct volcanoes, shedding a dim light on the malarious deadly jungles of the Terai, powerless to contend with its poisonous gases; while the Bible is the bright unexhausted sun, shedding its powerful light upon perhaps the same malarious jungle, but rendering its deadly atmosphere innocuous and safe.

THE books most serviceable to a missionary studying the Rig-Veda are, in addition to Aufrecht's and Max Müller's original texts:—

1. Wilson's *English* Translation, in 4 vols., bringing it down to *Mandala* viii. 20.

2. Langlois' *French* Translation, complete, 4 vols.

3. Rosen's *Latin* Translation of the first Ashtaka.

4. Max Müller's *English* Translation of various hymns, scattered in his works, and of twelve hymns

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to the Maruts in the 1st vol. of his Translation (1869). The 2d vol. is not yet (1881) published.

5. Shankar Pundit's *English and Marathi* Translation, with notes, commentaries, etc.; 4 vols., of upwards of nine hundred pages each. These volumes, containing in all two hundred and seventy-five hymns, have been published in five years. If it has taken five years to publish the 275 hymns, when will the 1017 be finished? This work is frequently quoted above under the title *Vedarthayatna.*

6. Romanath Sarasvati's *Bengali* Translation of the first sixty-one hymns, published during the last five years.

7. Dr. Banerjea's very fully English-annotated text of the first thirty-two hymns, prepared for the Calcutta University.

8. Dr. Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, 5 vols. The original Sanskrit of very many texts is given in the last three vols. in the Roman character, with an English translation. The texts are classified under various heads.

9. Monier Williams' *Indian Wisdom, Hinduism,* etc.

10. Weber's *History of Indian Literature.*

11. Benfey's *German* Translation of i. 1–118.

In addition to these, there are many other books that will be of more or less use to the student. He will find some of them quoted above.

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INDEX.

Aborigines, 122, 124, 189, 205, 210.
Abstraction (*tapas*), 36.
Aditi, 107, 126, 218.
Adityas, 109.
Age of Veda, 9.
Age of Veda MSS., 14.
Agni, 73, 107, 128, 136, 148–156, 200, 217, 232, 234, 238.
Ahura, 65, 106, 114, 199.
Angiras, 123, 226.
Angirasas, 51.
Anindra, 118.
Annihilation, 48, 231.
Annulment, 75.
Apsaras, 126.
Ark, 75, 251.
Asceticism, 29, 169, 178.
Assyrians, 217.
Asuras, 65, 106, 114, 199.
Aswins, 47, 102, 127, 163, 211, 216.
Atharva-Veda, 7, 49, 128.
Atharvan, 114.
Atheism, 204, 231.
Atmada, 86, 243.
Atri, 160, 213.
Authors of Veda, 8, 13, 95.
Avatars, 146.
Avesta, 69, 106, 205, 217.

Beef, 71.
Benevolence, 237.
Body, 52, 54, 250.
Brahma, 26, 34, 115, 131, 186, 192, 194, 247.
Brahman, 32, 64, 140, 186.
Brahmanas, 5.
Brahmo-Somaj, 116, 196.
Brotherhood, 196.
Buffaloes, 82.

Caste, 32, 36, 187, 208, 229.
Chastity, 44, 167, 209.
Child-marriage, 32.
Chyavana, 160, 215.
Contents of Veda, 18.
Couples, 157.
Cows, 71, 179, 212.
Creation, 126, 131, 220, 245.

Daksha, 126.
Daughters, 165, 177.
Deliverance, 34, 46, 55.
Deluge, 221, 245.
Demons, 188, 198, 200, 217, 243
Depravation, 245.
De Quincey, 98.
Devas, 87.
Dogs, 52, 183.
Doors worshipped, 225.

Digitized by Google

Draupadi, 164.
Drunkenness, 43, 63.
Dualisms, 103.
Durga, 65.
Dyananda, iv, 3, 20, 128.
Dyaus, 120, 246.

Ekantins, 143.
Esur-Veda, 4.
Exaggerations, 182.

Faith, 138–145.
False gods, 188, 201.
Fatherhood, 196–210.
Female Rishi, 160.
Fetishes, 127, 246, 248.
Frogs, 140.
Future life, 47.

Gambling, 44, 126.
Gandharvas, 126.
Ganges, 26.
Gayatri, 12, 93, 248.
Ghi (clarified butter), 229.
Ghosha, 166, 212.
Gift of a woman, 179.
Gladstone, 21.
Goat, 82.
Goddesses, 25, 126, 159, 161.
Gods, 25.
Gotama, 215.

Haomi, 68.
Heaven, 49, 103, 216.
Hell, 58.
Henotheism, 95, 101, 235.
Hinduism, 235.
Hiranyagarbha, 86, 91.
Holidays, 31.
Home, 190.
Horse, 77.

Idolatry, 23, 26, 97.
Images, 26, 97.
Immortality, 47.
Imputation, 42.
Incarnation, 146.
Inconsistencies, 226.
Indifferentism, 139.
Indra, 67, 74, 109, 110–114, 117, 121, 124, 204, 219, 237.
Indrani, 228.
Inspiration, 11, 16, 231.
Intoxication, 43, 62.
Iranians, 205, 217.

Jagannath, 207, 248.
Jesuits, 3.
Job, 131.
Jubal, 194.
Justice, 42.

Ka (who), 82, 107, 134.
Kacha, 63.
Kakshivat, 162, 214.
Kali, 82.
Khela, 216.
Kilmansegge, Miss, 216.
King, Rishi, 184.
Knowledge of Vedas, 16.
Krishna, 64, 143, 211.
Kushava, 219.

Lakshmis, 127.
Leper, 166, 212.
Liberality, 45, 48, 57, 182, 201.
Light, 98, 156.

Mahaprasad, 208, 248.
Man, 229.
Mandalas (Book), 6.
Mantras, 5.
Manu, 197, 206, 221.
Markandeya, 65.

Digitized by Google

Marriage, 33, 157.
Martin Elginbrodde, 111, 152.
Maruts, 126, 164.
Mediation, 148, 236, 252.
Meru (Merv), 142.
Metempsychosis, 29.
Meteorolatry, 100.
Miracles, 211, 232.
Monarchies of gods, 114.
Monogamy, 157–160.
Monotheism, 94–135, 230.
Morality, 37, 230.
Motherhood, 116, 196.
Music, 194.

NARADA, 143, 173.
Narayana, 142.
Navel of world, 74.
New dispensation, 116.
Nil Madhub, 248.
Non-Aryans, 205, 210, 248.
Number of gods, 96, 108.

OCEAN of milk, 143.
Odin, 114, 147.
Odinic song, 148.
Ouranos, 114.

PANTHEISM, 28, 131, 231.
Partridges, 13.
Path, Heavenly, 81.
Physiolatry, 100.
Pitris (Fathers), 49, 51, 55.
Places, Sacred, 30.
Polyandry, 163.
Polygamy, 160.
Polytheism, 94.
Posts worshipped, 224.
Praise, 193, 241.
Prajapati, 86, 92, 146, 243.
Prayers, 189, 192, 241.
Priesthood, 29.
Priests, 169, 187.
Primitive religion, 101.
Prophet, 236.
Puri, 208.
Purusha, 34, 83, 88, 132.
Pushan (Agni), 225.

QUAIL, 213.

RAKA, 158.
Rakshasas, 113, 150, 154, 188, 201.
Relation to gods, 136.
Repentance, 233.
Repetitions, 178, 191.
Resurrection, 52, 54, 250.
Revelation, 11, 14.
Ribhus, 29, 47, 127, 211, 216.
Rishis, 1, 6, 13, 169.
Rival gods, 117.
Rodasi, 164.
Rudra, 26, 142, 188, 217, 224.

SABAISM, 98.
Sabbath, 24.
Sacrifice, 73, 242.
Sakta Tantras, 66.
Sakti, 142.
Sama-Veda, 7.
Sanhita (*collection* of hymns), iv, 1.
Sanscrit, 5.
Saranyu, 50.
Sati, 32.
Satire, 31, 141.
Sautramani, 62.
Savitri, 93, 127.
Scepticism, 87, 138, 204, 221.
Sewing, 158.
Shraddha, 49.
Sin, 37, 97, 106, 251.
Social duties, 229.

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Soma, 61–70, 116.
Soma-juice, 66.
Soma-ox, 129.
Speech, 132.
Sukra, 66.
Sun, 93, 100, 104, 108, 124, 128, 235.
Sunahsepha, 88, 107.
Swarga (heaven), 49, 103, 216.
Swayamvura, 168.

TANGIBLE gods, 27.
Theft, 45, 183.
Times, 36, 237, 238.
Transmigration, 28.
Trasadasyu, 176, 184.
Travel, 33.
Tricks of trade, 45.
Tritheism, 106.
Tugra, 214.
Tvashtri, 47, 50, 216.

UNIVERSITY, Calcutta, 3.
Ushas (Dawn), 60, 159, 162, 166.

VAISHNAVAS (worshippers of Vishnu or Hari), 145.
Vamadeva, 137, 218.
Varuna, 75, 107, 114, 117, 124, 182, 185, 246.
Vasishtha, 41, 182, 184, 205, 226, 230, 231.
Vedanta, 35.
Vedas, Four, 7.
Venaspati, 224.
Veridana, 215.
Vimada, 214.
Vishnu, 67, 142.
Visvakarman, 86.
Visvamitra, 65, 205, 230.
Viswadevas, 102.
Vivasvat, 50.
Vritra, 72, 198.

WEEK, 24.
Who (god *Ka*), 82, 107.
Widows, 32, 33.
Wine, 62, 139.
Women, 157, 179.
Word, 132.

YADAVAS, 64.
Yajur-Veda, 7.
Yama, 50, 56.
Yatavedas (Agni), 54.
Yatudhanas, 188.

ZEUS, 114.

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